



Beautiful Mess by ImObviouslyCrazy

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Summary: Mike's life has been okay for five years. He has a girlfriend and his three best friends. But Mike never forgot the past. He never forgot Eleven. When he suddenly finds out she's alive, everything changes. He has to find her. He has to save her. Rated M for future smut

1. Chapter 1

Hey there! I got an idea for another Mileven fic, so I decided to write it out and see how it goes :) to all my readers that are coming over from "It's Still You," you guys are absolutely amazing for following me! I should have more free time coming up which means more updates :) enjoy! Let me know what you think and if youd like to read more of this fic!

Chapter 1:

Sheriff Jim Hopper parked his cruiser just outside the gates that led to the Hawkins National Laboratory. He climbed out of the driver's seat with a tired groan, a cigarette pinched lightly between his teeth.

Leaning back against the car, Hopper pulled his lighter from his shirt pocket and lit his cigarette. It was windy, but with his hand shielding the flame, he was able to light it fairly quickly. Fall was coming to an end, but it still smelled like dead leaves and bonfires outside.

There was a loud buzz that drew his attention to the gates as they began to part ways, sliding back in order to let two men come through. One of them was Dr. Brenner himself, which was usually not the case. Hopper pushed off his car to stand before them.

"Sheriff," Brenner greeted him stoically. "I didn't expect you to return so soon."

"Yeah, well, I brought something." He reached through the rolled down window of the cruiser and dragged out a plastic bag from the passenger's seat. He held it out to Brenner. "Last time I was here, she was running a fever. Has a cold, Im guessing."

"I don't think that's really your concern," Brenner frowned. "I assure you she's in good hands."

"Yeah," Hopper scoffed at his remark. "Right." He shoved the bag against Brenner's chest. "There's ibuprofen for the fever and some liquid cold medicine. She probably won't like the taste, but tell her

she has to take it to feel better."

"I'll pass the message along," the doctor said coldly as he took the bag from Hopper's grasp. Hopper eyed Brenner and his assistant intently.

"Listen, Doc, if I come back next week and she's not better, I'll come every damn day to give it to her myself. You're overworking the poor girl. Have been for years."

"Again, Sheriff Hopper, I don't see how that's your concern."

"Part of our agreement was that I can come once a week to make sure she's alright. I stay out of your affairs, I don't go to the feds, but I get to be concerned. It's the only reason I brought her back to you."

"Not the only reason," Brenner commented with a snarky grin. "You have others to protect. People with lives that don't need to be... disrupted again."

"Just give her the damn medicine," Hopper grumbled, pulling open the door to the cruiser. "I'll see ya next Wednesday, Doc." He started the car and drove away, watching the doctor and his assistant in the rearview mirror as he sped off towards the main road.

Mike Wheeler closed his locker just as a pair of all too familiar arms wrapped around his waist. He smiled to himself, then turned to look down at the big green eyes of the girl he'd been dating for nearly a year now. Lilly Mason, the prettiest blond in Hawkin's High.

"Hey there, hot stuff," she grinned up at him, leaning forward to rest her chin on his chest. "Are you ready to get out of here?" He placed a quick kiss to her forehead, then pulled away from her, taking her hand in his.

"I'm always ready to get out of here," he chuckled, walking with her at his side. "Are we going to the usual spot?" He glanced down at her, and she nodded excitedly. "Alright." They stayed side by side all the way to the parking lot, where they got into Mike's beat up old car and headed off to their secret spot.

It was hidden deep in the woods, off a little beaten path that not

many people knew about. It was a bit overgrown, which helped to keep it hidden. Only a few people from the high school knew about it, and they preferred it that way.

Once he parked the car, they both climbed out of the front seats and moved to the back. Mike sat back against the seat, propping up one arm on the door beside him. Lilly immediately toppled over to lay her head on his shoulder.

"Fall has always been my favorite time of the year," she sighed, closing her eyes. "I like the color of the trees and the mild temperatures and the smell of burning leaves in people's backyards."

"Plus, it'll be Christmas break in two weeks. And we have the cabin rented out next weekend. Lots to look forward to," he smiled softly. Lilly looked up at him, admiring his features. Mike Wheeler had grown into quite the man. She didn't meet him until their sophomore year, but she had seen pictures of the thin, dorky kid he used to be in his house.

Now, he was tall, lean, with well defined features and adorable slightly curly hair that she loved to bury her fingers in. Plus, she loved the feeling of his firm body when it pressed against hers. Lilly bit her lip, sat up, and climbed into his lap. She straddled him, planting both palms flat against his chest as she struggled a little to get comfortable.

"Here?" He hummed, an eyebrow raised.

"Where else? At your mom's?" She teased him sliding her hands under his shirt to feel the ridges of the muscles in his abdomen. "Besides, we can't get caught here."

Mike pushed off of the door to sit upright, hands moving to her hips. He really wasn't all too in the mood, but she was right. They may not have a chance to fool around until the weekend at the cabin, and even then, Dustin, Will, and Lucas would be there, too, just in the other room.

So he gave in, leaning forward to kiss her heatedly as he stripped her shirt from her body. She shifted in his lap, tugging up her skirt to

allow her legs more room to move. Mike knew the drill. It wasn't the first time they'd had sex in the back of his car, and he didn't imagine, at the time, that it would be their last.

Mike got home before his mom and Holly, which he was grateful for. That way she wouldn't ask him why he was an hour later than usual, or why he smelled like perfume. He headed upstairs immediately to shower.

Not too long after he got dressed again, the phone rang downstairs. He didn't know, in that moment before he answered it, how just that phone call was going to throw him into turmoil and flip his world upside down all over again.

"Hello?" He answered, expecting it to be one of the ladies that always called his mom to talk about recipes and other mom things. However, it was Will that answered.

"Mike, I have something I have to tell you, but I don't know how you'll feel about it," Will said, a little frantic on the other end of the line. Mike leaned back against the wall, eyebrows furrowing.

"Well, what is it?"

"I just heard my mom yelling at Hopper. She went down to that station earlier to have lunch with him, and I guess she overheard something she wasn't supposed to while Hopper was on the phone. And I think... I think you should know what I heard."

"What'd you hear?" Mike wasn't entirely sure how Hopper and Joyce's affairs had anything to do with him, but he didn't question it. Will was practically hyperventilating, which meant it was important.

"She told him, and these were her exact words, 'I can't believe you sold her out. That man only wants to use her. He doesn't care about her.'" Will paused to let Mike process the information before letting the real bomb drop. "She didn't say her name, but... she mentioned the lab. I think... I think she was talking about Eleven."

Just her name nearly tore his heart in half all over again. Mike had

never been able to forget about the lab, the demogorgon, and the girl that saved him from all of it. His first love. Eleven. It had been years since she disappeared. They all assumed she was gone, but if Will was telling the truth, and Mike was sure that he was, Eleven was alive and back at the lab. And Hopper had put her there.

"Mike?" Will called to his friend to get his attention. "Are you okay?"

"I can't believe he knew about this," Mike scoffed. "Hopper knew she was alive, and he never... never told anyone. All this time, I thought she was dead or worse, but she's..."

"Mike, there's nothing you can do."

"I can't leave her there!" He said a little louder than he planned. Mike quieted his voice and pinched the bridge of his nose as he took a deep breath. "I can't believe this, Will. I can't believe she's alive, and she's been in Hawkins this while time. We have to get her out of there."

"How? They'd never stop looking for her."

"I don't know, but I have to try. I'm starting with Hopper."

"Mike," Will pleaded. "Please be realistic. You're eighteen and in high school. There isn't anything you can do to help her. She's being held by a government controlled secret lab in the middle of the woods. They have big guns and lots of money. They could fake your death easily. They did it before. They'd do it again."

"I know." He let out a long sigh. "I know, Will, I just... I need to talk to Hopper at least. I have to know why he sold her out to Brenner. And why he never told us about it." Mike heard the front door open. "I have to go," he whispered.

"Mike, don't be stupid," Will begged. Mike didn't respond. He hung up the phone quickly as his mom came into the kitchen, trailed by his younger sister. He put on a fake smile and pretended everything was normal. He had to. His mother still didn't know the truth about everything that happened five years ago, and it had to stay that way.

2. Chapter 2

Wow guys! The overwhelming amount of amazing reviews you guys gave me last chapter just fueled me to update again :) I have so many ideas for this story and can't wait to go on this ride with you guys. Thanks for being awesome. As a thank you, please enjoy this update :D love you guys! Stay awesome!

Chapter 2:

Hopper was a little surprised to see Mike Wheeler in his office the next morning. He hadn't had much interaction with the kid since the incident with the monster a few years prior. Mike had been the one hiding the girl in his basement.

He knew well enough how Mike felt about Eleven, but they were kids. When he found her, lost and injured in the woods, he held up his end of the bargain by taking her back to Brenner. It wasn't what he wanted, and he thought about hiding her.

The only reason they were able to save Will was the deal he made with the devil. Hopper exchanged Eleven for the safety of everyone involved, Joyce, Will, and all of the kids that knew about Eleven. They were loose ends, and their lives would have been put at risk had he not made that deal. As villainous as it was, it was the only way to protect everyone.

The look on Mike's face told Hopper exactly what this surprise meeting was about. Joyce had found out, and Will likely overheard their screaming match. Of course Will would tell Mike. Nothing stayed secret in that godforsaken town for very long.

"Shouldn't you be in school?" Hopper sighed, moving around Mike and the desk to flop down in his chair. He rolled back a little so he could prop up his feet on the corder of his beat up old oak desk. He fished his cigarettes from his pocket. He was going to need them.

"You're a real son of a bitch, Hopper," Mike said, a frown etched into his features. He braced his hands against the edge of the wooden

desk, trying to remain as calm as possible. Nothing would be solved by yelling at the sheriff.

"How would you know, you've never met my mother."

"I'm not here to bullshit, Hop," Mike said angrily, hands slamming down onto the desk in frustration. "You knew. You knew all along, and you let us all think she was dead. I thought..." He sucked in a deep breath, standing up straight. "She can't stay there."

"She has to," Hopper argued with a shrug and an expressionless face. He couldn't get emotional, not in front of the kid. Mike sat back in the chair across from him.

"I'm not letting her rot away in there. She deserves better, she always did. That man doesn't care about her. He uses her. He makes her do things she doesn't like. They're murderers, Hopper! You're the goddamn sheriff! Why do you just let them do whatever they want?"

"You don't know what you're talking about, kid."

"Oh, really? I don't?" Mike scoffed. "I knew her for a hell of a lot longer than you did. I was the one who kept her hidden! She was afraid of him, and you sold her out to them. Why? Why would you do that, Hopper?!"

"Because if I didn't, Will would be dead!" Hopper snapped, sitting upright to look Mike in his eyes. "They were going to kill Joyce, you, your sister, Johnathan, Lucas, Dustin, whoever they had to kill to hide what they're doing out there. Will would have died in that place, and I sold her out to save everyone else! Hate me all you want, but you wouldn't want the alternative, kid, believe me."

Hopper stood, pulling the cigarette from his teeth that he had bit down on and ruined. He tossed it into the tiny, overflowing trash can under his desk and took a deep breath. After running a hand through his thinning hair, he turned his attention back to Mike.

"I did the only thing I could do. I go there once a week to check on her, to make sure she's alive and well. I didn't abandon her." He glanced up at the door as one of his deputies knocked lightly. "Go to

class. This doesn't concern you."

"How do I get her out?" Mike asked desperately. "How do I save her?"

"You don't. Now get out of here," Hopper ordered. Mike pushed off the desk furiously and stormed out of his office. No, he couldn't just give up, knowing she was out there, within reach, and all that was between them were fences and guns. Mike had to do something. No one was going to be able to convince him to let it go. Not now. Not after finding out she was alive.

Mike could have skipped the whole day, but his mother would be less angry if he was "late," than if he had avoided school altogether that day. Besides, it was his senior year and most classes were easy. He could breeze through the day and avoid the drama at home.

At the end of the day, as Mike headed to his locker to grab his things, he noticed Lilly waiting there patiently. He paused for a moment, wondering if he should just turn around and head home without his books. He didn't know what to say to her. In the end, he decided to man up and handle it.

"Hey," she said, perking up a little when she saw him approaching. "Where were you this morning?"

"I had a quick errand to run, nothing major," he lied with a phony smile. She noticed his odd expression, but didn't say anything. If there was something he wanted to talk about, he would talk. Mike had always been relatively open with her, excluding a few things about his childhood that he'd alluded to vaguely in the past. She learned not to pry.

"I was a little worried. Usually if you're going to skip, you call me, and we do it together. I thought maybe you were sick or something." She stood there patiently as he collected his things from his locker. "But you're okay?"

"I'm fine," he lied again, effortlessly. "Are you riding home with me today?"

"If you're not busy. If you have more errands, I can take the bus." She rocked back and forth on her heels, a little anxious. She hadn't seen him with that distant look in his eyes in quite some time. It worried her.

"I actually do have something to do. For my mom. Are you sure you don't mind taking the bus?" He asked her, closing his locker and stuffing his books into his bag. Her eyebrows furrowed momentarily, but she nodded.

"I'm sure. Take care of whatever it is you have to take care of."

"Alright, I'll call you later." When he finally looked up at her face, a pang of guilt rippled through him. He could see the worry in her eyes, and he couldn't help but suddenly feel bad about lying to her. She'd never lied to him, or kept any secrets from him. He tried to smile genuinely to soothe her. "I love you. I'll see you in the morning." He kissed her head gently, then started towards the parking lot.

"I love you," he heard her sigh behind him.

Mike stayed up all night coming up with a plan. It wasn't foolproof, and it was dangerous, but it was the best he could do. Lucas and Will were usually the ones that were good at coming up with plans, but he didn't want to involve them if he didn't have to. That way, they wouldn't be the ones that the men from the lab came after. Mike was only willing to risk himself.

Part of his plan required him to write a long, detailed account of everything he knew about the lab and their experiments, leaving out the less believable details like Eleven's powers and the monsters they brought into their dimension.

He wrote about how they were experimenting on Eleven, and how they faked Will's death. There was evidence to support that much at least, which would be enough to convince reporters and newspapers to start investigating. If it went public, the outcry would bring the feds to Hawkins, and the lab would be shut down.

That paper, the story of what happened, would be hidden safely away as insurance, along with a letter giving someone instructions to take it to a reporter who would publish the story. It was the only way he could think to keep them from killing him outright and faking his body like they did Will's.

The harder part to figure out was how to actually get Eleven out of the lab. It wasn't as if he could just waltz right in. He had to figure out how to get in without suspicion, and how he planned to sneak her out. With that, he also had to figure out how to get a gun, a handgun he could hide in his waistband and use to get out of the lab.

Once he got to Eleven, he knew that she would help him get her out. She didn't want to be there back then, and he was sure she hated it even more after tasting freedom and eggos. If he could get to her, the two of them would be able to get out.

As he pieced together this flimsy plan, and wrote out this expose, he wondered what she looked like, how she had grown. What did eighteen year old Eleven look like? He was excited and frightened all at once, but he was sure of one thing, he wouldn't leave her in there any longer than he had to. He didn't know how Hopper could stand it, knowing she was trapped and miserable.

He was going to do something, and he wasn't going to let anyone or anything get in his way.

3. Chapter 3

Ahh you guys are so cool leaving such awesome reviews :D im so happy you all like the story. With all these amazing reviews, its hard not to keep updating for you guys :D so enjoy!

Chapter 3:

Mike was nervous, probably more nervous than he'd ever been in his entire life. His knuckles went white as his grip on the cart full of cleaning supplies tightened, but he managed somehow to keep a stoic expression.

He had watched the lab for days from the woods, watching every employee that went in and came out, trying to figure out the best way for him to get in. The janitors all wore the same outfits, grey jumpsuits that he had seen at the local hardware store. That was his best bet.

He waited until the weekend, bought a jumpsuit identical to theirs, then followed them inside. At the door, he had to lie and say he was running a little late. After pleading with the man at the front entrance not to "tell his boss," Mike finally convinced him to let him through.

He kept his head low, letting some of his shaggy brown hair cover his eyes as he pushed the cart down the hallway. He quickly and discretely looked through every window of every door. None of them held the girl he had come to retrieve. Mike knew that what he was doing was ridiculously dangerous, and he was putting his own life at risk in order to save someone who wasn't in immediate danger. If it was anyone else, he might have changed his mind.

As people passed him, they either ignored him entirely or gave him a funny look. Somehow, they could tell he wasn't a familiar face, but since he was dressed like the rest of the janitors, none of the guards or doctors in white lab coats said a word about him. It was such a flimsy plan, but something they didn't expect to happen. Since they didn't think anyone would be stupid enough to break in, they didn't

alert anyone to the slightly out of place boy.

With a deep breath, Mike pushed on, wanting desperately to find her as quickly as possible and get out of there. His heart was violently thudding in his chest, making it harder to breathe as more time passed. At some point, he knew someone would figure out that he didn't belong there, that he wasn't a janitor that they had hired. He had to get to her before they realized that.

Finally, after what felt like forever, he made it to a door that had bars on the window. It was at the end of a long hall, and there was next to no one around. He stood upright and peered through the window. In the far right corner, he saw her. She was in a white tank top and white shorts that barely covered much more than her bottom. Her body was curled up on a small cot, and she was hugging a pillow against her chest, sleeping.

His heart felt like it was going to burst from within his chest. There she was, Eleven, his first love, someone he thought he had lost a long time ago. He thought she was dead, after five years of nothing, there didn't seem to be any other explanation. Her hair had grown a little, though it was still short and only came down to her jawline. It hadn't been growing for very long, it seemed, but it was full of thick waves that partially fell over her face as she slept.

Eager to get out of the situation he was in, Mike immediately grabbed the handle on the door, trying to turn it but failing. Of course it would be locked. They couldn't let her run around the compound. He stared in at her for a moment longer, and he realized, that under her hair, she was blindfolded, but it was more like a leather band than cloth. They wanted to make sure her eyes were covered, and he wondered why.

After looking around to make sure he wouldn't be noticed, Mike knocked on the door lightly, hoping to get her attention. Eleven stirred slightly, so he knocked again. This time, she sat upright, her hair falling away to give him a better look at the band they had put around her eyes. She reached up to tug at it, but it didn't come loose. Mike knocked again, which brought her to her feet, though she stumbled a bit due to her temporary blindness.

"Papa?" He heard her voice, small, muffled by the door between them. His whole body seemed to ache with sorrow, excitement, and fear all tearing through him at once. He leaned in close to the glass.

"El?" She stopped in her tracks, her hands moving up to her mouth as if she was shocked. Tears immediately began to slip down her cheeks from under the leather band. She was crying. Mike was relieved that she had remembered him, had remembered his voice, even if it had deepened. He knew her name, her nickname, that they all used for her. Somehow, as he knew her, she knew him, even after five years apart.

Mike turned to look down the hallway as he heard men talking, approaching. He began to panic, and he yanked a rag from the cleaning cart. Wrapping it around his knuckles, he punched at the glass between the bars on the door until it cracked, then broke inwards. Knocking the glass around the hole loose, he reached his hands through the bars.

"Come here, El, and turn around. Let me get that thing off of you. We have to go," he said frantically, reaching out towards her as best as he could through the bars. "I need your help, El. I can't get you out of here without your help."

"But Papa..."

"I'm not afraid of him, El. Please, just... let me take you home." His chest was heaving now, his hands and arms shaking as they desperately tried to reach her. The men were coming closer, having likely heard him shatter the glass. Eleven took a few steps forward until she felt his hands. Mike helped her to spin around, and he got to work undoing the clasp that was holding the leather band around her eyes in place. It took some brute strength and maneuvering, but eventually Mike forced it apart, and it fell away from her face. She turned to look at him, and he couldn't help but think about how she had the same big doe eyes she had before.

"Stand back, Mike," she said, her voice soft and shaky. He nodded, then pulled his arms from the bars, stepping aside. The door creaked, groaned, then burst outwards, bending and warping as she forced it open. She stepped out, and Mike ran to her. He couldn't help himself.

Relief washed over him, relief after five years of thinking she died to save him. The guilt, the sadness, the depression; none of it ever left him, not for one moment. Not until he met Lilly, but even not completely then.

He hugged her to his chest for only a moment before setting her back down. He brushed her tangled waves from her face and looked her in the eye.

"You have to get us out of here. Okay? They can't see me or figure out who I am. How do we sneak out?" Eleven blinked at him, then looked back at the sounds of voices just around the corner. Men were yelling, and she knew they would hurt Mike if they caught him. She brought her attention back to him.

"Stay, Mike." She pulled away from him, then walked down the hall slowly. Eleven looked up at Mike once more just before she disappeared around the corner. Mike did as he was told, his feet planted though his heart begged him to follow her. It seemed like she had it under control, however, when the voices turned to shouting, then stopped all together. Eleven came back around the corner, her white tank top now speckled with crimson.

Mike pushed the cleaning cart towards her, then pushed off all of the supplies from the bottom shelf. He took her by the hand, pulling her over to where he set it and urging her to get down on that bottom shelf and pull her knees to her chest.

"Just stay down and stay quiet," he pleaded with her, throwing a trash bag over her, then piling on towels until he couldn't see her anymore. He had to hurry, so he began pushing the cart rapidly down the hallway, in the opposite direction of the corpses he imagined Eleven left behind. When he saw some of the guards approaching him, he ducked his head low and pointed behind him.

"Guys, I heard a loud noise back there," he told them, doing his best to sound frantic but confused. "Like glass shattering." The guards looked over his shoulder, nodded at him, then started down the hallway where he had pointed. Mike kept his head low, pushing the cart around until he found a door that led outside but didn't take them to the front gate. It was behind the building, where the air

conditioning units and dumpsters had been.

"Come on, El," he said softly, digging her out of the towels and plastic bag he had hidden her with. She climbed off of the cart with his help, and they both took off towards the fence, hand in hand. Eleven stared at the metal wiring, until it began to bend and twist, breaking open enough for them to slip through. Mike paused as a loud commotion began to erupt behind him, alarms and lights and men shouting. "Come on, we need to hurry." He grabbed her hand again, and they ran until her legs began to give way. Even then, Mike just lifted her onto his back and continued to run for the both of them. He didn't stop until he reached the street where he had left his vehicle. Once inside of it, he sped off without looking back even once.

Mike had a lot of practice sneaking Lilly into the basement of his house, so it wasn't difficult to get Eleven down there without his mom noticing. She had been cooking anyways, and playing some old records of hers. His mom didn't even notice him.

Mike shut the door to the basement once they were inside, and he sat on the steps for a moment to catch his breath. For the first time since before he found out about Eleven, he let out a breath. His chest relaxed enough to let him breathe again, without feeling like he was choking. He ran a hand through his shaggy brown mane.

"You came for me," Eleven said softly, bringing his attention up to her. She was standing at the bottom of the steps, hugging her upper body tightly with her thin arms. She looked like she hadn't been eating properly, not enough anyways. "So long..."

"I didn't know you were there," he explained, seeing the question on her face without having to hear it. "I thought... you were dead, El. Hopper knew about you, but he never told anyone. I just found out, and as soon as I did, I came after you. I would never leave you in that place if there was something I could do about it. I didn't even think it would work, but I guess after five years, they relaxed a little on the security."

He was surprised when she rushed up the steps to him, throwing her frail arms around his neck and squeezing him tightly. Mike closed his

eyes and let out a sigh, hugging her back. Growing up, he thought he would never see her again. It had taken him so long just to be able to live with the memories he had of her, and of losing her, but finding out she was alive threw him back into that panic, into that desperation to find her.

He had spent years of his life talking into radios and searching the woods for any sign of her or the Demogorgon that took her. He always came up with nothing. To know that Hopper knew, that entire time, where she was and that she was alive, it tore him up inside, even if on some level he understood why Hopper did what he did.

A knock on the basement door brought him out of that moment of bliss. He pulled away from Eleven, then rushed her down the steps. Mike ushered her towards the bathroom, then started to close the door. Eleven reached up to grab it, to stop him from shutting her in there. He paused for a moment, thinking about that first night they met when he was just twelve years old. It was such a similar night. Rainy, dark, and she was just as afraid.

"Please just stay in here and stay quiet. No one can know you're here." She hesitated for a moment, but eventually nodded. Mike pulled the door closed, then started towards the steps just as the basement door opened.

"Mike?" Came Lilly's voice as she slowly came down the steps. That feeling of panic hit him again, but he hid it well. She looked down as she walked, and she smiled when she saw Mike standing by the couches. "Your mom didn't know if you were home. You weren't answering the phone. Were you sleeping?"

"Yeah," he cleared his throat. "I didn't sleep much last night."

"Is everything okay?" She asked him, cocking her head to the side as she looked up at him. He was a little disheveled and sweaty. Lilly stepped up to him and reached up to comb through the tangles in his hair with her fingers. "Are you not feeling well?"

"No, I think I might have a cold," he lied calmly, coughing a little for added effect. "I'll probably be staying home for a couple of days. As much as I'd love to see you, I think it's better if you don't get sick,

too." Lilly frowned at that.

"Someone should take care of you, don't you think?"

"My mom will. She always does," Mike shrugged his shoulders. "Really, Lilly, I don't want to get you sick. You have that big test in Chem coming up, and your play. It's your dream role. You can't go on stage if you're sick." He brought her hand up and kissed the back of it softly. "I'll be fine. I'll call you every night at the same time as usual. It's just a couple of days, Lil."

"Okay," she sighed, still dissatisfied with the fact that she wouldn't be able to see him, even if it was just a couple of days. "If you need anything at all, just call me. I'll bring over chicken noodle soup or cold medicine or whatever you need." She stood on her toes to kiss his cheek, giving him a quick smile. "Get some rest, Mike Wheeler, so you can get back to school. It's always so lonely there when you're gone."

"I will, Lilly," he smiled back. "Go study some, since I won't be there to distract you. Run lines with Anna." He let out a sigh of relief as Lilly headed back up the stairs. He followed behind her.

"Yeah, yeah, I got it *dad*," she said teasingly. "You take care of yourself."

"I will *mom*." Mike shot back playfully. She gave him one last smile, a beautiful smile as always, before closing the door behind her. Mike groaned in frustration, leaning forward against the door and wondering how in the hell he was going to deal with this situation. It might have been better to tell Lilly the truth, but how in the world would he explain to the girl he loved that he had just rescued a different girl he loved from a secret government lab in the woods that wanted to exploit her superpowers for evil purposes. He couldn't. Lilly would think he was delusional, or trying to hide an affair even though neither were true.

Eleven emerged from the bathroom after a moment, her eyebrows furrowed.

"Lilly?" She questioned.

"Yeah," he exhaled softly. "Lilly."

4. Chapter 4

Im so glad you guys are enjoying this story :) i like that youre feeling the conflict, and giving me feedback that helps me keep going. So here's another update for you guys! You guys being excited for this story has made me hype for it, too lol I'll also be updating "Its Still You" by tonight or tomorrow :) enjoy, you awesome people!

Chapter 4:

Eleven sat on the pallet of blankets and pillows Mike made for her under the stairs. It was hidden well enough so that Mike's mom wouldn't see her if she opened the door to call for Mike as she so often did. Her legs were pulled to her chest, and her chin was resting on her knees. Mike could see, even from across the room on the couch where he was laying, even in the dark of the night, that there was something wrong.

He sat up from the couch, leaning on his elbow to support his upper body. He called her name softly, knowing that his parents bedroom was above the basement on the ground floor of the house. If he was too loud, they might hear him and wonder who he was talking to. Eleven didn't look up at him, so he decided to slid off the couch and walk across the room to where she was. He knelt down on the floor in front of her.

"What are you thinking about?" He asked her curiously, sitting back off his knees and letting his knees hold up his elbows. Eleven lifted her head to look at him, her eyes sad and mind clearly somewhere else entirely.

"Nothing," she said simply with a shrug of her shoulders. "I am... okay." Mike wondered why in all her years of living she never learned to lie properly. He took a deep breath, going through a list of things he created in his head that she might be upset about. Before he had a chance to ask about any of them, Eleven gave him the answer he needed. "Who is... Lilly?"

Mike could have lied, like his gut told him to do in that moment. However, he respected Eleven enough that he figured she deserved better than a lie. She and Lilly both deserved better than whatever lie he could have constructed about who Lilly was.

"She's my girlfriend."

"Girl friend? Like me?" Eleven questioned, her eyebrows furrowed. It tore at his heart that he was going to have to correct her, and finally, after all these years, explain what it meant to be more than friends.

"No, it's not the same. A girlfriend is someone who is more than a friend. Someone a guy really likes and wants to be with all of the time. It's a relationship. Love, and all of that stuff." He hated the look of disappointment on her face. Eventually, she dropped her gaze from him altogether and stared at the blankets underneath her. "Eleven, I had to move on. I couldn't... grieve for the rest of my life."

"Grieve?" She questioned.

"Be sad. Miss you. Hate myself for letting you sacrifice your life for ours," Mike corrected to explain it a little easier for her. Some words she didn't know at all, and it saddened him that after all of this time, she was still so far behind in speech and vocabulary. It made him wonder what they did with her for all of those year when she was locked away. "It was killing me, El."

"I grieved," she said softly, hugging her knees even tighter against her chest. "It didn't stop." Mike brought a hand up to his forehead, running down his face in frustration and guilt. What was he supposed to do? He didn't know any better. Hopper never told anyone that she was alive, and that Brenner had her locked up in the lab again. If he had known, even at twelve, he would have done everything within his power to get her out of that place. "Lilly is... nice."

"She is. I think you two would get along. Maybe even be friends if... if the situation was different." Mike closed his eyes for a moment to sort through his thoughts. He had to be completely honest with her. There was no way around the truth. "Lilly can't... know about you, El," he told her as much as it pained him to do so. Eleven brought her eyes back up to meet his, the confusion clear even in minimal lighting.

"Why?"

"Because I never told her about everything that happened," Mike shrugged. "I never told anyone. None of us did. How am I supposed to tell her that I have to hide my first love in the basement because men are trying to lock you up and kill me in the process?" Eleven blinked a few times. First love. She didn't know what it meant, but she knew roughly what love was. She was Mike's first love, and knowing that made it a little easier for her to understand the problem.

"Jealous," she nodded. "Lilly would be..."

"I don't know," he groaned a little. "Maybe. Either way, she'd be upset that I'm putting my life in danger. Me sleeping down here with you wouldn't make her very happy either. Neither would finding out about all of these things I've hidden from her. El, please, just... She can't find out."

"Okay," Eleven gave in, not wanting to cause any problems for Mike, even if the thought of him with another girl made her chest hurt in a way it never had before. He had said it himself. He moved on. Mike wasn't what she remembered, and his feelings for her had changed. She hated it, but she couldn't be mad at him for it.

Mike was about to say something else when he heard a light tapping on the basement window. His eyes widened a bit, and he sat back to look over at it. Through the old, thin white drapes, he could make out a familiar figure.

"Shit," he cursed under his breath, pushing himself to his feet. Eleven watched in wonder as he scurried over to the window and pulled the curtain apart. There was a girl at the window. Mike unlocked it, and with her help, the window was pushed open. Eleven hid under the stairs and listened in.

"What're you doing here, Lil?" He whispered, though she could hear him clearly because of the silence in the house. The girl slid through the window, dropping to her feet in front of Mike. "I told you I was sick, Lil."

"I know, but you didnt call like you promised," she pouted up at him. Mike internally kicked himself for forgetting, but there wasn't much to say about it now. "I missed you." She threw her arms around his neck. "I was lonely."

"Im sorry, but you really shouldnt be here. I dont want to get you sick." He put his hands on her hips and pushed a little, but she didn't budge.

"I don't care." She raised herself on her toes to kiss him hungrily. Mike turned his head away after a moment, so she began trailing kisses down his throat. "Come on, Mike," she purred, her hand finding its way down to the strings of his pajama pants. She pulled them loose. "I missed you."

"Lilly, please," he said a little firmer than before. She slid her hand under his pajamas, and Elevens cheeks heated up instantly. She turned away, keeping her back to the scene unfolding.

"Not tonight," he insisted, grabbing her hand and pulling it away. Lilly raised an eyebrow at him,

"Are you turning me down, Mike Wheeler?" She asked with a little bit of a playful snort. "How very unlike you. You really must be sick." She brought both of her hands up to his face. "Alright. I'll let you rest. Just promise to call."

"I prom-"

Mike stopped himself midsentence when he noticed Lilly's attention divert to the left. Both of her eyebrows were raised now, and her playful smile faded away entirely.

"Mike, who is this?" She asked bluntly. Mike turned to see Eleven standing there, wearing nothing but one of his tee shirts, which he imagined looked terrible to Lilly. His girlfriend of the past year stared up at him, betrayl in her eyes, "What is she doing here, Mike?"

"Damn it, El, you were supposed to stay put," Mike frowned at Eleven. Lilly stepped back from Mike, turning her attention back to Eleven. Her heart was breaking at the sight of the other girl, barely

clothed the shirt she had on belonged to Mike. "Lilly, it isn't what it looks like."

"Then what is it?" She asked, her voice shaky. She didn't sound mad, she sounded heartbroken, and Mike wished she would have just gotten angry instead.

"It's... it's complicated."

5. Chapter 5

Chapter 5:

Mike took a few slow, deep breaths to steady himself. He was, for lack of a better word, torn between lying to Lilly in order to keep her from finding out who Eleven really was, or telling her exactly who Eleven was and risking losing her. In the end, he gave in to the part of him that demanded he tell her the truth.

"She's a girl who is in trouble, Lil," he began his explanation, hoping it would be enough to keep Lilly from hating him. "I knew her when I was younger. She was... important to me. To Dustin and Lucas, too."

"Friends," Eleven piped up from behind Mike.

"Yeah," Mike nodded, briefly glancing at El. "She was our friend, and bad people were after her. They're still after her. I went, and I... I took her from them. I brought her here because no one else is supposed to know. Anyone who knows about her is in danger."

"If I happen to believe you," Lilly frowned, crossing her arms over her chest, "that still makes you an idiot for going and getting yourself in trouble like this. You can't hide a person forever." Lilly wanted to believe him. Mike had never lied to her before, so she wanted so badly to believe him. "Why is she wearing your shirt?"

"Her clothes got blood on them, but she they were barely clothes anyways," he shrugged his shoulders. Lilly's eyes widened a bit, and she looked up at Mike intently.

"Blood?!" She smacked Mike in the arm lightly. "Are you really this stupid, or does she just make you that way?" Lilly scoffed at him. "If she is in danger, real danger, you're risking your life instead of just calling the authorities. You need to hand her over to witness protection or something. If she's in as much trouble as you say she is."

"I can't do that, Lilly," he told her softly. "Hopper will take her back."

"Sheriff Hopper?"

"Yes, he knew," Mike grimaced. "He knew this whole time that she was out there, that those... people had her. He was going to leave her there, but I couldn't." Lilly could hear the panic and desperation in his voice.

But the panic wasn't over her finding out about this girl, and the desperation wasn't over whether or not Lilly would believe him. He was afraid of losing this girl, and he was desperate to keep her from going back to wherever she came from.

"She wasn't just your friend," Lilly asked calmly, "was she?" Mike stared down at Lilly, his lips slightly parted as he frantically searched his mind for a good answer. "You loved her," she breathed, taking a step away from him. "You still love her." Tears slid down her cheeks. "I can't believe you."

"You don't understand what we went through, Lilly, how all of it changed every single one of us," Mike tried to make explain himself. "She was... my first love. I didn't even know what love was at the time. She saved my life. More than once. She saved Will's life. Dustin's and Lucas's, too."

"You don't have to explain anything to me," Lilly shook her head at him, dropping her gaze to her feet. "You need time, fine. Take some time. Have some space. Figure all of this out, and if you miss me like I'll miss you, call me."

She moved to the window, planting her hands on the ledge and hoisting herself back through it. She slid it closed, then started down the street. Mike watched her leave, his own eyes red with tears. He let his head fall forward against the window sill.

"God damn it," he said through gritted teeth. He threw his fist into the wall, not hard enough to put a hole in it, but hard enough to bruise his knuckles he was sure.

Eleven could hear the hurt in his tone, and it saddened her. She stepped over to him, wrapping her arms around his waist and hugging him gently, laying her head on his back. Mike's fury started to fade almost instantly, and his breathing slowed. He laid his hands over hers, closing his eyes and just accepting her embrace.

"I'm sorry, Eleven. I'm sorry that all I'm good for is hurting people." She squeezed him a little tighter, but she didn't have the right words to explain to him why that wasn't true. All she could do was hug him, and he didn't mind it at all.

"Will!" Lilly called after Mike's friend, scurrying down the hallway after him the next day at school. Will paused and turned back to look at her, both eyebrows raised in confusion. She stopped a couple feet away from him, and Will could already tell she was upset.

"What's wrong?" He asked her, shifting his backpack on his shoulders. He hadn't spent much time with Lilly without Mike being around, and it felt a little weird.

"Tell me about the girl Mike is hiding in his basement," she demanded, though she was trying to be polite about all of it. No matter what she did, she couldn't stop herself from missing him.

"The girl in his basement?" Will questioned, thinking deeply. When he finally realized who she had to be talking about, his eyes widened. "Aw, no, Mike. You dumbass." He groaned in frustration, then turned to leave. He needed to get to Mike's as quickly as possible to confirm his suspicions and make sure he was okay.

"Will, please," Lilly begged, following behind him. "Please, tell me about her."

"I can't say much."

"Does he love her? How long has it been going on?" Lilly continued to pry, desperate for answers, any answers. "Will, please help me out here. I don't know what to do."

"She was his first crush when he was a kid," Will sighed, pausing to turn and talk to her again. "I wasn't around at the time, so I didn't see them together. But I saw what happened to him after she was gone. He wasn't the same, not really. It took a long time for him to stop looking for her, to stop obsessing over it."

Those weren't the words she wanted to hear, but everything just

seemed to be reaffirming one idea; Mike was in love with this girl, and he may never had stopped loving her. As much as it hurt, Lilly knew deep in her heart that she couldnt blame Mike for the feelings he had before they ever met.

"She's back now. Do you think... his feelings for her have changed?"

"Lilly, I know he loves you," Will frowned. "I know he would never try to hurt you, or do so on purpose. But I also know that... if Eleven is back, then I'm sure he's experiencing a lot of confusing feelings. It was something unresolved to him. It wasnt like they broke up, or she moved away. They were separated against their will, and that was why it was so hard for him to accept. I cant... explain it all, so it won't make sense to you. But she was... from what I gathered afterwards, she was incredibly special to everyone she met, but especially to Mike."

Lilly wanted to cry, but she wouldn't, not in front of Will or anyone else at school. She had a reputation for being tough, and she wouldn't lose it. It was too easy for certain people in that school to victimize people they assume to be weak.

"So I don't have a chance, then? It's just... over for me and him?"

"Lilly, I can't tell you that," Will sighed. "It's a decision that Mike has to make. All I can ask is that... you don't hate him if it's not the decision you want him to make. It's not his fault. It was something that happened to him. Something he had to go through. Now. I'm sorry, but I have to go." He offered a small, sympathetic smile, then headed off down the hallway.

"Thanks, Will." She watched him leave for a moment, then leaned back against the nearest wall. It was so hard to figure out what to do or think. In the end, she knew she had to listen to that old cheesy saying. If she loved Mike, she had to let him go. Hopefully he'd come back, and they could be together, but if not, better that she accepted it instead of clinging to him desperately and trapping him in the situation.

Mike laid on the sofa as he listened to the water run in the shower in

the bathroom. He had turned it on for her, made sure it was warm, then left to let her wash up. But as he sat there, Mike's eighteen year old brain couldn't help but wonder what she looked like without clothes on.

He tried to chase away those thoughts, rolling onto his side. His focus shifted to the spot where she had stayed for a long time, her little fort he made for her. It had been dismantled, but the foundations of it were still there, along with the radio he'd always left there in case she was able to reach out to him.

After five years, Mike had thought that longing had finally gone away, but he was wrong. The moment she came back into his life, all of those feelings of loss and heartbreak came back to him. But now there was even more to lose.

Mike had tried not to think of Lilly all night. As much as he wanted to be sure of his relationship with her, he wasn't. The fact of the matter was that Mike was incapable of letting Eleven go, and it was amplified the moment Will told him she was still alive. He couldn't help it, nor could he bury those feelings. In the end, Lilly was the one he would hurt. It pained him to know that.

The door to the bathroom opened, and Eleven emerged in another one of his tee shirts, but this time, he'd given her some old pajama pants to wear. It was all incredibly baggy on her small frame, but at least she was clothed completely now.

"Do you feel better?" He asked her, sitting up on the couch. She smiled a bit and nodded. Eleven moved to sit on the sofa beside him, pulling her knees up to her chest as she so often did. Mike wondered if it was a nervous gesture. "El, I want you to promise me something."

"Yes?" Her eyebrows furrowed as his tone suddenly became serious.

"Promise me, no matter what, you won't let them take you back there. You have to fight for your freedom. You can't... let them take you away again. You deserve a better life."

"I promise," she told him honestly. "Will I stay here?"

"Until we find a better place, yeah," Mike nodded. "I can keep an eye on you down here. I can keep you safe. I just know... eventually they'll come looking for you here."

"Oh... I will protect you," she told him quietly. Her hands began to fidget against her knees. Why was it like this now? Why was it so awkward for them just to be close to each other and talk? Eleven didn't know why, but Mike did. They had grown up, and grown up feelings were different.

"Eleven," he sighed, finally giving in to a little impulse of his. He reached over and took her hand in his. He brushed his thumb over her knuckles. "I just want you to know that... Even though I am with... was with Lilly," Mike began, not sure whether or not Lilly had left him, "my feelings for you never went away. I still... feel the same way."

"The same way?" She looked up into his eyes. She remembered the last time they had a talk like this. When Mike tried to explain that she was more than a friend, that he liked her. It seemed so much simpler and less serious then. But more than anything, she remembered what he did. "Like this?"

Eleven pushed herself over to him, using his shoulders to pull herself closer, close enough so that she could gently touch her lips to his. They were as soft as she remembered, and her heart fluttered the same way it did back then.

Mike sat perfectly still, dumbfounded and unsure of what to do. It felt like he had to make a decision, right then and there. He couldn't make everyone happy without tearing himself into pieces. No. He had to decide, even if it hurt more than he could bear.

Mike lifted a hand to her soft cheek, then let it slide back to bury in her waves. He kissed her back, a little harder, a lot more passionately. Eleven was stunned at first, but it excited her so she didn't protest. She let her eyes close, and she drifted away into that kiss.

6. Chapter 6

Hey guys sorry for the wait! Today (Sunday) was my bday and we spent the weekend with family and friends :) I hoped to update beforehand but I wasn't sure what to do in this next chapter. Anyways! Enjoy :) please let me know what you think.

Chapter 6:

Mike was dreading going back to school, but he knew he had no choice. Before he even made it into the building, Will, Lucas, and Dustin spotted him. They hurried over to him, pulling him to the side away from everyone else along the side of the building.

Mike knew what they wanted to talk about as soon as he saw their faces. He hadn't told anyone about rescuing Eleven, but Will more than likely let Dustin and Lucas in on the situation. It wasn't Will's fault. Mike didn't ask him to keep it a secret.

"Have you gone mental?" Dustin started with a scoff. "You snuck into Hawkins Lab and stole Eleven? Do you know how dangerous that is?"

"What was I supposed to do?" Mike frowned. "Would you have rather I left her in there to be used and abused? You should see her. She's so skinny, like they haven't been feeding her enough. And they had some kind of leather blindfold on her. With no clothes."

"Jesus," Lucas breathed, not really liking the image Mike was providing them. Eleven had, for better or worse, been their friend. Even if he didn't trust her for a long time, by the time they lost her, he had accepted her entirely. Enough to be bothered by what Mike was telling him. "That doesn't make it a good idea to hide her at your house."

"Yeah, they're going to come looking for her, Mike," Dustin agreed. "You shouldn't put yourself in danger like this. They were going to kill us before, they'll definitely do it now." Mike looked down at his feet. He knew they were right, but he still wasn't going to apologize for what he did. Rescuing Eleven was something he'd dreamed of for a

long time. She didnt deserve the suffer for their sake.

"What do we do?" Will spoke softly to break up the silence. "We're not going to let you do this alone, Mike. What can we do?"

"I don't know," Mike shrugged his shoulders. "Right now I just have her hidden at the house. Maybe I should bring her to school with me. Tell them she's my cousin from Sweden again so they'll let her tag along to all my classes. I dont want to risk exposing her though."

"What about Lilly?" Will asked, thinking back to the conversation he had with her before. "What are you going to say to her?"

"I've already... had to explain it to her. I told her Eleven was being abused and needed help. That she was an old friend. I didnt lie, I just didn't tell her everything. How can I?" Mike let out a soft sigh of frustration. "Nobody would believe us if we tried to get help. Hopper would, but he was willing to let her stay there all this time. He never would have told anyone."

"Hopper had his reasons."

"Still," Lucas interjected. "That means we can't trust him. Or any cops. What about Johnathan? He carries a gun. Hopper taught him how to use it."

"He doesn't know, but I think he'd help," Will nodded. "Maybe it would be better for Eleven to stay at my house, Mike. We wouldn't have to hide her. Mom knows about her, and Johnathan knows. She'd be safe and not stuck in your basement."

Mike went silent for a moment, pondering on that thought. He didnt like the idea of being separated from Eleven after all the time he spent searching for her, and the years he spent accepting that she was gone. However, Will had a point. His family knew and cared about Eleven. Joyce cared about her. She wouldn't have to hide or be snuck scraps of food. It would be better, ultimately, for her, even if it would suck for him.

"Talk to your mom," Mike asked Will, "and make sure she won't let Hopper take her away again. I'm not letting them lock her away

again."

"Just remember we're not kids anymore," Dustin told him. "We can be held accountable. They won't be so hesitant to kill us this time around." They all knew how Mike felt about Eleven, and how her disappearance nearly destroyed him as a person. None of them had ever felt a love like that even as they aged, much less when they were so young. It was hard to grasp how Mike was feeling with Eleven back in his life but still in danger.

"No one is going to die," Mike promised. "I'm going to fix this. Somehow."

"We're with you," Lucas said as he put a hand on Mike's shoulder. "We'll figure it out." Mike nodded at his friends, and the four of them started towards the school together. They had to keep up appearances if nothing else. That way, they wouldn't be immediately suspected of anything.

Mike had been spaced out all day, and he was relieved when the final bell of the day rang through the halls. He hurried out to his car, only stopping by his locker for a few minutes. He was excited to go home, to make sure Eleven was okay and still hidden. He would have to move her to Will's soon, but he would soak up the time he had with her.

He was startled when he saw Lilly leaning against the passenger side of his car. For a moment, he paused, not even wanting to go over there until she gave up and left. Then again, Lilly could be stubborn when she wanted to be. He had to bite the bullet, or wait for hours.

"Mike," she called when he came into her view. Taking a deep breath, he walked to the driver's side of his car and unlocked it. He tossed his backpack into the back seat while Lilly sat in the passenger's seat. He climbed in, too, starting the car like normal. "I want to talk. Can we go to our spot? Please?" He hated the desperation in her voice.

"Lilly, can't we talk here?"

"Aren't you keeping her a secret? Secrets are best discussed away

from people," Lilly noted, looking down at her hands nervously. They were fidgeting, something she did when she was upset or afraid.

"Okay," he gave in, knowing that he couldn't avoid her forever. He backed out carefully, then headed towards their spot in the woods, the spot they had spent so much time together in. There was history there, and he wanted to avoid it for the time being. She wasn't going to back down, though, so he had to go.

Once they got there, Mike slowed the car to a halt, then turned it off. There was no use in wasting gas to sit there and talk, though he considered keeping it on so he could leave at any moment without even the slightest hesitation. He wasn't afraid of Lilly, but he was afraid of his own guilt, and how it would eat at him if he didn't keep it in check.

"I don't want to be the bad guy here, Mike," she said after a few moments of unbearable silence. It's just... hard to accept. We've been together for a year, and I thought we were in love. For things to change so quickly, I just... I don't understand. It's hard to understand."

"I know, Lil. I'm so sorry. I didn't know this would happen. I don't know what to do either."

"Did you just... fall out of love with me the moment you saw her?" She asked without fear. Mike had wanted to avoid this very conversation, but he wasn't able to. "Or do you just love her more?"

"I still love you, Lil. I won't be able to just stop loving you, even if I wanted to. It wasn't like that. I thought... being older, having not seen her in five years, I thought I could avoid this problem. I wanted to stay with you, but I had to save her."

"You've always had a big heart," Lilly smiled a bit, but the pain was so evident behind her eyes. "I know I said I would wait, but I don't know that I can. Every day we're apart, you're going to get closer to her. It's natural, when you love someone to want to be close to them."

"What're you saying, Lil?" Mike frowned. Was he ready to lose Lilly entirely? For awhile, he thought he would be. That helping Eleven

had to be a priority. However, now that it seemed like he would definitely lose Lilly for good, a part of Mike ached deep inside of him, ached with loss and guilt.

"I'm saying that... I repeat that she was your first love. You were mine, so... I know how powerful that is." She sniffed, tears slipping down her cheeks now. He wanted to hold her. Mike hated making girls cry. "I'm saying that I'm going to step back. I don't want to make this hard on you, so I'll make it simple. It'll be my decision to... to go my own way."

"You're leaving me? For good?"

"I don't want to," she cried a little, bringing her hands up to her eyes. "I never want to leave you, but I won't be the reason you suffer. If you love her, be with her. Help her. Do whatever you have to do. But don't worry about me. I don't want you to worry about me."

Mike barely realized the tears that were dripping down his own cheeks until the water in his eyelids had blinded him for a moment. He squeezed his eyes shut, gripping the steering wheel so tight that his knuckles turned white. His head fell forward, and his chest felt like it was caving in.

"Mike, please don't cry," Lilly begged. She leaned over to take his face in her hands so she could look him in the eyes. "Don't cry. I'm doing this for both of us. It's our best option at this point. I don't want to hold you back, and I don't want to wait for something that I may never have again. Neither of us deserve to suffer."

"I'm sorry, Lilly," he cried. "I'm so sorry." She looked into his tear-filled eyes, and she couldn't help herself. It was the man she loved, and he was hurting so badly, worse than she'd ever seen before. Lilly pushed herself up from her seat and kissed his lips softly, holding his face between her hands tightly. Mike closed his eyes and accepted her kiss.

"It'll be okay," she sniffed, laying her forehead against his. "It'll get better over time. We're young. We have plenty of time." She kissed his forehead, then sat back in her seat. Lilly brought her seatbelt back around and clicked it into place. "Are you okay to drive?"

"Yeah," he nodded, wiping his own eyes quickly. "Are you ready to go?"

"Yes," she nodded, inhaling deeply. "I'm ready." He started the car again, glancing over at her as he backed out of the woods slowly. She was right, ultimately. They would both suffer if they tried to hold on to one another amidst the situation. Even if he didn't care about his own suffering, he cared about hers. Mike wouldn't force her to wait.

In the end, Lilly would be happier if she let go and moved on. In time, the wounds would heal. The cleaner the break, the quicker they'd heal. Lilly's strength and smarts were what made him fall for her to begin with. He admired her, and he admired how she was handling the situation.

She was too good for him, always had been. He hoped she didn't regret it later, and he hoped even more that she never resented him. Mike couldn't bear it if she hated him.

7. Chapter 7

Chapter 7:

Lilly and Mike didn't talk much after that. Their interactions had been limited to half-hearted smiles and casual greetings when they saw each other at school. It bothered him, on some level, to feel like they had become strangers all over again when only two weeks prior, they have been sleeping together and sneaking in kisses at school.

The only compensation for that loss, was what he was slowly regaining with Eleven. She had been moved to Will's house like they discussed. He went by every day after school to see her, of course, but it had become quite lonely at night again with her gone.

It was better for her, though, as she didn't have to hide with Joyce, Will, and Johnathan. She could roam the house freely, eat dinner at the kitchen table with them, and take showers as she pleased. They could be a family for her, and Mike understood that. It was the only reason he agreed to let her out of his sight.

Everything seemed to be going well, until Eleven showed up to his school with Will one morning.

"My mom insisted she come," Will explained when Mike approached him. "She thinks it'll be good for her to learn and make friends. She told the principal that El is my cousin from some random country in Europe and can't speak English."

Eleven shifted her weight nervously beside Will, sensing that Mike was really upset and a little afraid. She was a little excited to follow Will to school, as she was feeling isolated and confined at the house when everyone was gone to work or school.

"Mom didn't feel right about leaving her home alone all day," Will finished his explanation. Mike let out a sigh, then leaned back against the car nearest to him. Joyce had a point, but having Eleven out in the open was not something Mike was comfortable with given the circumstances.

"Is she following you to every class then?" Mike asked, needing reassurance. Will nodded, pulling the strap to his backpack up his shoulder again. "Don't let her talk to anyone."

"I won't," Will nodded. "I'll watch out for her when you're not around, Mike. I promise." With Will's genuine promise, Mike thought it would all be okay. Unfortunately, that wasn't the case.

Mike had snuck out of class during Will's lunch break, hoping to see her for just a few minutes and check on her before he had to return to chemistry. When he located her in the cafeteria, she wasn't alone, but she wasn't with Will.

"What, don't you talk?" The tall boy asked Eleven, leaned a little closer to her. She couldn't press back into the wall anymore, so she just looked around in hopes that Will would return from the restroom soon. "Hey, can't you speak English?" The boy asked, forcefully turning her head to bring her attention back to him.

Eleven lied by shaking her head and looking down at her feet. He laughed at that, which only unnerved her. His companion was leaning against the wall a foot away from them, arms crossed like he was bored at the moment, though his eyes were scanning the room.

"You can understand me, though," he commented, glancing up at his friend. "Do you think she's really Byers' cousin? I think she's too pretty to be related to him."

"Who knows?" The other boy shrugged. "Will's mom is kinda hot. Maybe the good genes just skipped a generation." The boy towering over her snorted at his friend's remark. Eleven didn't know what he meant by "hot," but she wanted desperately to be far away from them.

"You think she's easy?" The boy closest to her tugged a little at the end of her skirt. "She seems like she's one of those girls that's secretly a freak. You know, in the good way." Eleven swatted his hand away from her skirt and tried to push past him to escape. Unfortunately, she couldn't use her gift, as Joyce specifically told her it wasn't allowed.

"Where you going?" The boy asked, grabbing her arm. "Come on, stay for awhile. We don't bite."

"I do," came a voice she was all too familiar with. Mike pushed past her, taking the boy by the collar and shoving him back into the wall. The boy's eyes widened a bit, startled by Mike's sudden aggression.

"Mike Wheeler," the boy grimaced. "What the hell is your problem?"

"You keep your fucking hands off of her, Troy," Mike said through his teeth, tightening his grip on the boy's collar. Troy was a name she faintly recognized, though if she recalled correctly, Mike introduced him as Mouthbreather.

"Is she your girlfriend now?" Troy spat back. "Is that why you dumped Lilly?"

"Just leave her alone. She's not some new skirt for you to try and get into bed." Mike shoved Troy away and took a few steps back to get closer to Eleven. Troy fixed his shirt quickly, then walked off. At some point during puberty, Mike had gotten bigger than Troy, stronger. Troy learned to stop messing with him, even though he still never passed up an opportunity to tease Will.

Troy had failed a grade or two, nobody really knew for sure. All they knew is that everyone was sick of seeing him around. He had been grating too many nerves for far too long.

Once he was gone, Mike turned back to Eleven.

"Where's Will?"

"Bathroom," she muttered, keeping her head low. He was angry, and she hated when he was angry. It was hard to even look him in the eyes.

Mike stayed for a couple more minutes until Will returned. He was holding a hand over his stomach, which made Mike uneasy.

"Are you okay?" He asked Will with concern. "Are you sick?"

"No," Will shook his head. "I'm fine." Mike's eyebrows furrowed as he

looked over Will, who looking like he was a little disheveled from the last time he saw him. After years of attending school together, Mike knew how to make sure Will was telling the truth.

"Liar," he accused, grabbing the bottom of Will's shirt. He lifted it a little, which revealed a dark purple bruise on the side of his stomach. "Damn it, Will. Why didnt you say something?"

"I said Im fine," Will frowned. "It's a couple days old, so it's not as bad." He tugged his shirt down with embarrassment.

"Who was it?"

"Who do you think?" Will sighed, crossing his arms. "The only person who still thinks tormenting me is fun. It's how he gets his kicks. Im sorry I left El alone for so long. Nothing happened, right?" Mike looked over at Eleven, then back to Will.

"No, she's fine. I just came to see how she was doing." Mike let out a sigh, then reached up to pinch the bridge of his nose. "We have to do something about him, Will. Put him in his place, or something. I swear if I could catch that kid in a parking lot somewhere, I would make sure he never bothered you again."

"We graduate this year," Will shrugged, "then I never have to see him again. I'm biding my time. It's gonna be over soon, and hopefully the next time I see him is when the News shows his mugshot."

"Mugshot?" Eleven questioned, looking between the two boys.

"It's not important." Mike rubbed his hand over her arm in an effort to comfort her. "Keep an eye on her, Will. All of these hormonal teenagers keep eyeing her like fresh meat." He looked around the room and thankfully didn't see Troy anywhere.

"I've been watching her," Will nodded. "My art teacher let her draw today. She's actually not that bad at it." Will smiled over at her, and the smile that grew on Elevens face calmed his panic a little. She seemed to be enjoying her day, despite the incident with Troy. Maybe she felt normal, like other kids her age. That was worth something.

"Ill take you both home today. Okay?" Mike offered, as he had been

for the past few days. It was extra time with Eleven, which was something he would always try to get in an way he could. Will nodded in agreement. "Okay, I have to go," Mike cleared his throat. "I told my teacher I had to use the bathroom ten minutes ago."

"Go," Will waved him off. "We'll be fine."

Mike smiled at Eleven as he turned to walk away. It bothered him a little that he couldnt be in Will's shoes, getting to spend all day and night with her. It made him a little jealous, though he didnt want to be. It was Will, after all, one of his best friends. He shouldnt have been jealous. But he was.

8. Chapter 8

I meant to type this on the "Its Still You" the update but I forgot XD so hey guys! Sorry bout the long wait. Ive been working a lot this week and trying to be on the forum and trying to write original works as well lol just a lot to do and not enough time or energy to do it. But i have no plans to quit these stories until their finished :) so without further ado, enjoy!

Chapter 8:

Eleven actually liked school, which was enough to prove she definitely wasn't like other teenagers. She enjoyed learning, listening, and most of all, she loved going to art class with Will. He was teaching her a few tricks, ways to draw things better, or to shade things, or highlight them.

Mike could feel and see the bond growing between them, and as hard as he tried to ignore that feeling in his gut, it was difficult. Seeing someone else taking care of her and making her happy bothered him.

He decided, then, that he needed some alone time with her. That way, he could build a better relationship with her, one like the one he wanted. Eleven was naive, unaware of the intentions of Mike's heart. He wanted to love her like a woman, and to do that, he had to show her what that meant.

After he dropped Will off that afternoon, he brought Eleven home with him, at least for a little while. He would take her back to Will's that evening if need be, but for a little while, he just wanted to be alone with her.

"Seems like you're having fun at school," Mike smiled over at her, dumping his backpack on the floor. "At least someone enjoys it. Everyone else wishes it was over already." Graduation was so close that he could feel freedom almost within his reach. Once he graduated, he was packing up everything he had, Eleven included, and driving far away, where no one could find him.

"Its okay," she nodded moving to the spot in the room where her little blanket fort used to be. She rubbed her hand over the table she had slept under before she ended up back at the lab. Her smile faded a little. "I miss you."

"I miss you, too, when you're gone," he sighed, sitting down on the couch. Mike fidgeted nervously as he watched her look around the room. It was like she was home again, after a long time of being away. "Eleven, come here," he said suddenly.

She looked up at him, eyes fixated on his for a moment. Eleven briefly took her bottom lip between her teeth, then nodded over at him. Slowly, she made her way across the room, stopping in front of him, her arms wrapped around herself.

"Eleven, do you understand love?"

"No," she admitted. "Not... really." Mike offered his hands to her, and after a moments hesitation, she laid both of her own in his palms. Closing his hands, Mike pulled her down into his lap, moving his hands down to her thighs to shift her so that she was straddling his lap.

"I want to show you what it is, but I know it'll take time. Love isn't easy to explain, you have to feel it." He brushed her hair back, noticing the flush in her cheeks and her wide, doe eyes. Mike's hand rested on her cheek gently. "Do you want me to show you?"

"Y-yes," she stuttered out, her heart thumping wildly in her chest, uncontrollable by any efforts she put forth to steady it. Mike brought her face down to his so he could press his lips to hers. He held them there for a long moment, then his hand slid back into her curls, and he sat up to turn her around and lay her back on the sofa.

He looked down at her from where he was hovering above. Her reddened cheeks and lustglazed eyes were enough to drive him crazy if he let them. Eleven didnt even know what sex was, but she could feel desire, she wanted to experience intimacy, whatever that meant.

However, there was also a child-like fear in those big, doe eyes that made him resist those urges. He kissed her again, keeping it soft,

innocent, then laid down beside her, wrapping an arm around her waist so he could hold her close enough to keep them from tumbling off the sofa.

"Is that it?"

"No," he chuckled. "Just a piece. A small example. You have plenty of time to figure it all out. There's no rush." He had to bury his deep, dark desires in exchange for preserving her innocence for awhile longer. Eleven wasn't ready, but he was sure that she would be, with time.

The next day at school, Eleven sat down to lunch with Will and Lucas. They were talking about some arcade games, and who was better than who. Lucas insisted that he used to have the high score, but Will didn't recall him ever having his name on the scoreboard.

It seemed like a normal day until Troy and his Goon, Justin, sat at the table on either side of Eleven. Lucas and Will shut up immediately about scores and looked over at the two boys surrounding Eleven.

"Did Mike cheat on my cousin?" Troy asked bluntly, picking lazily at the food on his plate. "You are his friends. You would know."

"No," Lucas said immediately. "Mike would never do that to Lilly. He loved her."

"How do you explain this pretty face, then?" Troy asked, running his fingers through Eleven's hair. "See, Lilly seems to think Mike cheated with this girl. Or at the very least fooled around with her a bit before he dumped her. Now, if that's the case, I can't very well just let Mike get away with hurting my baby cousin, now can?"

"Then, take it up with Mike," Will frowned. "El didn't do anything to Lilly. None of it is her fault." Troy dropped his hand to the table and grimaced.

"Maybe you're right, but I have a feeling Mike will be a little more sorry if someone else suffers for his wrongdoings. He's too damn

stupid to feel bad if it only affects him."

"It's not fair for you to hurt Eleven," Will protested, a little bit of panic building within him. He had been bullied mercilessly by Troy since grade school, and to stand up to him would only lead to more pain and suffering for Will. The bruise on his abdomen throbbed at the thought of it.

"Leave her alone," Lucas said sternly. "I'm serious."

"Yes, Midnight, we all know how serious you always are," Troy shrugged. "I don't care either way. I'll find out, and I'll make Mike pay. Maybe have some fun in the process." On impulse, as a way to piss off Mike Wheeler, as Troy stood up, he grabbed Eleven's face a little forcefully and planted a hard kiss on her lips.

Eleven couldn't help her reaction. She shoved him, with her telekinetic strength, and he flew back into the table behind him. When Troy stood up, his eyes were wide and full of a fire that had burnt out a long time ago, yet was reignited by Eleven's actions.

"You," he hissed. "It's you. I should've known." It all came back to him, then, memories of his childhood and the crazy, bald girl that nearly ruined his life. She embarrassed him in front of the whole school, and she had even broken his arm to protect the losers she was close to. It was her. It had to be her.

"El, let's go," Lucas urged, jumping up from the table to grab her arm and pull her with him. Will followed behind, and the three of them rushed away from the situation.

"You'll pay, too! You all will! You crazy bitch!" Troy seethed loudly behind them. There was nothing they could do now, but Eleven revealing herself would undoubtedly bring trouble. If not from Troy, then from other people seeking to harm Eleven. They had to tell Mike, and quickly. Eleven had to be hidden, at least for a little while.

9. Chapter 9

Thanks so much for all of the awesome reviews! I appreciate the feedback always :) it's become clear I need to clear some of the stuff up with Lilly because I think there are some misconceptions with her lol so I wanted to update quickly and hopefully put your minds to ease :) enjoy!

Chapter 9:

Mike went to Lilly's house immediately after finding out what happened. He was enraged, mostly by Troy, but also because it seemed like Lilly had sold him out. Troy had gotten his information from Lilly, and that hurt Mike deeply, as he felt they left on okay terms.

When Mike began dating Lilly, he knew that it may be difficult since Troy was her cousin by marriage. They hung around together at family events and holidays. The hate that existed between Troy and Mike was a concern, but Lilly had promised she could keep Mike separated from Troy. She admitted that even she disliked Troy at times.

For a year, she kept that promise. Troy left Mike alone, though the same couldn't be said about his friends. Mike should have known that the breakup would only encourage Troy to try and pick a fight with Mike again, after holding back for so long for Lilly's sake.

When Lilly answered the door, she looked genuinely surprised to see Mike. She looked around, then invited him inside. He had been in her house a few times, so he instantly trekked up the stairs to her bedroom, seeking privacy.

"Mike, what's wrong?" She asked, closing her door behind them. She crossed her arms over her chest. "You're upset."

"Your asshole cousin needs to fuck off," Mike snapped angrily. Lilly raised a brow, then leaned back against the door. "Why did you tell him I cheated on you?"

"I didn't," she frowned. "I didn't tell Troy anything."

"Then why is he coming after me? After El? He told Will and Lucas that you said I cheated on you, and that he wasn't going to let me get away with it. Why would you be so vindictive?" Mike was angry, hurt, and disappointed all at once.

"Mike, slow down," she said, putting up her hands in her defense. "I promise I didn't say anything to Troy. I never said you cheated on me. I was talking to Victoria about the situation by our lockers. We talked quietly, but maybe he still overheard."

"What did you tell Victoria?"

"That you wanted to be with a girl you used to love, and I let you go," Lilly shrugged. "Look, you can be mad about the fact that I told Victoria the truth, but don't blame me for Troy. He does what he wants, and he honestly could care less about our breakup."

Victoria was Lilly's one and only best friend. Mike was aware of the fact that they discussed everything together, and it never bothered him. It still didn't. He talked to his friends about everything, so he couldn't complain.

"You swear you said nothing to Troy?" Mike pushed. Lilly nodded,

"I don't talk to him unless I have to. He's my family, not my friend. Besides, I wouldn't do that to you. Come on, Mike. You know me. I've never been spiteful or vindictive about exes. I told to be with... with El. I'm not going to be mad about it now. It hurts, and I miss you, but that's it. It's over. I'm not going to harp on it forever."

Mike let out a sigh and sat back on the edge of her bed. He rested his head in his hands in frustration and inhaled deeply. This whole thing was turning into a nightmare, and Mike didn't know how to handle it anymore. He was in over his head.

"If it makes you feel better, I'll put Troy in his place. I have some dirt on him I can use to get him to back off. Will that solve your problem?"

"You're willing to help?" He asked curiously, eyebrows furrowing.

Lilly shrugged,

"I don't want him telling people he's acting on my behalf anyways. I never wanted him to go after anyone. I never wanted him to know everything. I'm sorry, Mike. I didn't know he would be such an idiot. I only told Victoria. I swear."

"Okay," he nodded. "I believe you. Get Troy to back off, then we should let ourselves become strangers. Some people aren't able to be friends."

"I agree. It'll be easier to get over with distance. Goodbye, Mike. I'll take care of Troy."

"Thank you, Lilly." He stood and moved past her, shimmying out of the door and trotting down the steps. He hoped that Troy would listen to Lilly, and that whatever leverage she had would be enough to protect Eleven from him.

Mike was grateful to Will, who let Eleven and Mike hang out alone together at his house. Joyce was working, and Johnathan was out of town for a week. Will went to Lucas' for the night, and Mike and Eleven were able to spend some time alone.

He showed her some movies that Will had, wanting to see her reactions to them. She was in awe at some of the special effects, even if they were pretty cheesy. He learned that she liked horror movies the best because they seemed so realistic to her.

It was odd to see just how naive and childlike she was. Her innocence was both adorable and concerning. Still, he enjoyed watching her wide-eyed wonder, and he enjoyed even more the big grins that she wore as she watched movies.

After awhile, she started to get tired and laid down on the sofa with her head in his lap. It had been awhile since she'd been so comfortable, and felt so warm. The lab was a cold place, harsh and uncaring. Mike was the complete opposite, and it made her happy.

"Do you still want to go to school, El?" Mike asked suddenly. She

looked up at him in confusion.

"Yes."

"Can you wait just a couple of days?" He questioned, running his fingers through her soft hair. "Let me make sure things are settled. If they are, you can come back without worrying about the mouthbreather."

She thought for a moment. She was always bored while everyone was away, but she knew that Joyce would be there at least until Will came home. She wouldn't be alone entirely. Also, she could watch more movies to pass time.

"Okay," she finally deciding, nodding her head and turning back to the TV. "Will you come visit?"

"Of course. Ill bring you home with me for a bit if you'd like," he offered to make her feel better. "We can play games and watch TV. The guys can come over to play cards or something."

"No," she said. "Just us." Eleven pushed herself up from his lap so she could look him in the eyes. "I am happiest with just us." It was blunt and a little odd for Mike, but he understood. She wasn't a social person, though she was steadily growing in that respect. For awhile, he knew she would prefer to be with Mike and only Mike.

His fear about being alone with her for a long time stemmed from his lack of self-control. Mike had always been a little impulsive, and he found himself battling his inner desires when they were alone together. Eleven had no idea the things he thought about when he was alone at night. She was so beautiful and he loved her. He couldn't help himself.

"Okay, El. We'll make a night for just the two of us." He brushed his hand through her hair, resting his hand on her cheek. "After I make sure everything is alright at school."

"Okay," she nodded, leaning in quickly to kiss him. Mike used his leverage with his hand on her cheek to hold her there, letting himself enjoy the feeling and taste of her lips. Eleven didn't mind. She liked

kissing Mike, even if she only recently understood what exactly kissing was and what it meant. She would continue to learn more each day, she figured.

"I love you, Eleven," he whispered to her, resting his forehead against hers. "I'll do whatever I have to do to keep you safe. Im never letting you go again."

"Me either," she responded with an equally soft tone. She looked up at him, wondering why he was so anxious and upset. It was obvious he was worried, but he shouldn't have been. Eleven wasnt afraid. She trusted Mike and his friends. Everything would be okay because they were together. Eleven wouldnt let anyone separate them, never again.

10. Chapter 10

Chapter 10:

Mike hated being separated from Eleven. He had been alone in that basement for a long time, and yet, somehow, he suddenly felt very lonely at night down there by himself. Not to mention that he was constantly worried about her, for her. What was he supposed to do if Brenner showed up at Wills and they needed help? He doubted he could get there in time.

He knew he had to figure something else out, but first, he had to take care of Troy. They had been attending the same schools for a long time, and Mike knew exactly where he could corner Troy. Outside, on the side of the building farthest from the parking lot, is where Troy and his friends always snuck out during lunch to smoke.

The moment that Troy stepped around that corner, the next day, Mike grabbed him by the collar and threw him back against the bricks, holding him there forcefully.

"Let's talk, Troy," he said. The slightly smaller boy tried to jerk away, but Mike held him firmly. "You're going to leave me and my friends alone. From now on."

"Or what?" Troy hissed. Mike didn't bother with words. Apparently words weren't enough to keep Troy at bay anymore. Mike took a small, quick step back, then threw a punch directly into Troy's jaw. Troy groaned and tried to slump over, but Mike kept him pinned against the wall.

"I'm not messing around anymore, Troy. I'm so serious. You're going to leave them alone, or I'm going to beat your ass every single time they tell me you bothered them. Any of them."

"That freak broke my arm," Troy spat, shoving Mike back a little, prying his back from the brick. "It still doesn't feel right!"

"I don't care about your arm, Troy," Mike rolled his eyes. "She did what she had to do to protect us. You had a knife. You had it

coming." Troy was seething, panting heavily from their encounter. He turned away from Mike with a scowl on his face.

"If you want to protect that... thing... fine. I won't do anything." Troy was smart enough to know when he was beaten. Mike was a little taller, a little leaner, and Dustin was much bigger than Troy. Lucas and Will were the ones Troy targeted because they were the same size or smaller than him.

"You'll leave Will alone, too," Mike pushed. "If I see another bruise on him, I'm going to ruin you. Do you understand?" Troy said nothing, so Mike hit him again, not caring if anyone saw or if he got in trouble because of it. "Don't be stupid, Troy."

"Yeah," Troy breathed, grabbed his aching jaw. "I got it." Mike shoved off of him, straightened his brown leather jacket, then turned to head back inside. Troy stayed there, leaning against the wall for a moment, wishing he had just graduated when he was supposed to instead of failing a grade. Then, he would have been far away from the school and that monster Mike was so infatuated with.

Hopper had never appreciated quiet days more than he did in the seven years that followed the incident with the monster and the lab. Before then, he didn't enjoy the silence, the small, insignificant daily calls and complaints.

He'd reassigned his officers from before and hired new, capable deputies. They handled most complaints on their own, and handled them well. He could count on deputies Hammond and Grant. Hopper was able to sit at his desk most days, leisurely handling paperwork.

The moment that he saw Brenner step into his office, Hopper longed for a quiet, uneventful day. Brenner closed his office door, then lowered the blinds.

"What're you doing here?" Hopper demanded, standing up with muscles tense. Brenner stood there, in all his arrogant confidence, looking at Hopper as if Hopper was some pawn he could use whenever he pleased. Hopper didn't like that look.

"Eleven is missing. She's escaped, and I can imagine you may know where she has gone," Brenner said calmly, pulling out the chair across the desk and sitting. "Now, I need you to tell me where I can find her. If you retrieve her yourself, I won't have to use force on children."

"What makes you think she's with one of the kids?"

"Because in all these years, she never stopped asking to see Michael Wheeler." Brenner tapped his fingers against his knee in annoyance, aggravation, as if just saying the boy's name enraged him for some reason. "You know how young girls can be. They become infatuated with things so easily." Hopper said nothing and just stared at the white haired man across from him.

Brenner shifted in his seat. "You must retrieve her, Sheriff, or we will."

"You're not going anywhere near those kids," Hopper said sternly, his eyebrows furrowed. "If I so much as hear a complaint about a vehicle parked outside, you will regret the moment you crawled out of that lab of yours." Hopper stood then, hands planted on his desk. "I'll find the girl. You stay out of it, Brenner."

"Well, if we're on the same page, there isn't any need for threats." Brenner stood, too, unphased by Hopper's words. He fixed his jacket, then headed out of the door. Hopper waited until he disappeared entirely before he sat back in his chair. He let out a sigh, then picked up the phone beside him and dialed Joyce's number. Will would know if Mike had been up to no good.

Eleven chewed on her bottomlip gently as she waited by Mike's car with Will. Her first day back to school had gone smoothly, and the mouthbreather had left her and Will alone all day. She was happy, and she was able to paint in Will's art class that day.

After school, Will told her that Mike had asked him to bring her to the car. Will was planning to ride home with Lucas, since he was staying over for the weekend. Mike and Dustin were planning to join them Saturday night, and Eleven would likely go, too. Lucas' parents were gone until Monday.

Finally, Mike got to his car, thanked Will, then packed up to go home. After saying goodbye to Will as well, Eleven slipped into the passengers seat and closed the door.

She expected him to drive her right to his house, but instead, he chose a secluded spot in the woods, hidden from the road by trees. He sat back, then pulled the keys from the ignition.

"I've been coming here for a few years now. By myself at first, then with Lilly." He looked over at her and smiled. "It's quiet and secret, and I can think clearly out here." Eleven just looked at, going over the words he said twice to make sure she understood them all.

"Eleven, I have a few questions. Do you mind answering them?" He asked her gently, and while she trusted him completely, those words always brought her anxiety. Doctors and men in white coats had asked her to answer so many questions in the past, questions that made her uneasy.

"Okay."

"Do you trust me?" He needed to know just how much faith she had in him. Eleven nodded her reply, eyes searching his desperately. "I called Nancy last night. I told her everything, and she wants to help. She offered to help us disguise you a little. So... you'll dress up kind of like you did before."

"They will notice... at school..."

"They'll think you dyed your hair or something. It's okay if they realize because they don't know you as Eleven. You're someone else to them." He reached over to take her hand. "Eleven, will you tell me what they do to you in there?" Mike never asked questions as a child because the details hardly mattered to him. She was a girl and needed his help, so he helped her. Now, as a man, Mike needed to know so he could help her better than he did before.

"In... there..." She dropped her gaze to her lap. It was hard enough to find the right words on a daily basis, but to find the ones to explain everything she'd been through in five years seemed impossible. "They like tests. We do... so many tests."

"What kind of tests?"

"On me," she answered. Eleven lifted her hand to her head. "In here." They pushed her abilities constantly, used them for personal gain. She was an instrument to them.

"Do you know if they are involved in the government?" She recognized that word. Papa had used it before to explain something to her.

"No. The gov..ernment," she said slowly to sound out the syllables, "it was angry at Papa." Her head hurt just having to search through her memory so dilligently. It was tedious. "It wont help him anymore."

"Thats good," Mike smiled, running his fingers through her hair. "Thats good, El. It means he's working alone. The government wont help him cover things up anymore." He noticed the strain in her eyes so he decided to save the rest of his questions for later. "You did good, El."

"I did?"

"Yes," he chuckled. Mike leaned over, close to her, and Eleven closed her eyes as Mike kissed her lips gently. He leaned back for a bried moment, then buried a hand in her hair and kissed her again, a little harder, a little hungrier than before. Eleven gripped the edge of her seat with onr hand, then held onto his arm with the other. Kissing wasn't something she knew how to do very well, but it seemed to go smoothly, naturally, with Mike.

After a moment, Mike's whole body was leaned over the center console. Eleven was pushed back against the door, not that she noticed it much. All she could think about was the way his mouth moved against hers, and the faint taste of spearmint on his tongue that explored hers so intimately.

His hand eventually wandered down to her thigh, gripping it tightly in his large hand. Eleven gasped a little, and Mike pulled back to look her in the eyes. His grip immediately loosened.

"Did I hurt you?" He asked softly, guilt in his eyes already.

"No," she shook her head. "I'm okay." Mike nodded, then kissed her again, once more, before sitting back in his seat. He leaned back and closed his eyes.

"I'm sorry, El. It's harder than I thought it'd be to take things slow." Mike had been with two girls before Eleven returned. One he slept with, dated for a week, then agreed to part ways with after she insisted that she wasn't in the mood to be in a relationship.

The second was Lilly.

Mike was a teenage boy who had desires like every teenage boy. As much as he prided himself of being different than the skirt chasers at his school, with Eleven, he was so damn eager to know what she felt like. She was a mystery to him in so many ways, a secret he wanted to unlock in every way possible.

At the same time, it felt wrong. She was still so naive, so child-like, that it felt incredibly odd for him to push those boundaries. Then again, she was a woman now, built like a woman, with feminine curves and smooth, silky skin. Mike was struggling a bit with the part of himself that wanted her so bad that he laid awake at night thinking about her. That desire was overwhelming the part of him that knew it was wrong.

"Don't say sorry," she frowned at him. "I don't want you to be sorry." Mike stared at her for a moment. She was trying so hard to catch up to her peers in every way she could. It was obvious that she wanted to feel like a woman, not be treated like a child forever. Still, one step at a time, Mike reminded himself.

"Do you want to walk through the woods a little? It's pretty this time of year."

"Okay," she nodded, smiling a little now. "A walk sounds fun."

Hey guys! Hope you enjoyed the chapter :) i worked a lot this week, then had a migraine for a solid few days which was awful but I shouldnt have waited so long to update. Im going to be updating all my active stories in the next couple of days while

Im off! So i look forward to your feedback :) sorry again for the wait.

Also, I know theyre taking things much slower this time around, but its because i want this story to be different than the other in a lot of ways :) that way it doesnt feel repetitive. But I'll giveyou guys all the smut and fluff you want in time, I promise :) thanks for sticking through with me, yall are awesome!

11. Chapter 11

Chapter 11:

Finally, Saturday came after a grueling week, and Dustin, Mike, and Eleven joined Will at Lucas' to spend the night. With his parents gone, Lucas had his older cousin buy some cheap beer and a bottle of liquor to spice up the evening.

Of course, as most of their parties often did, the evening led them to a game of truth or dare. Usually, they would do stupid things like prank calls and running through the street in their underwear, things teenage boys would dare other teenage boys to do just to get a good laugh at their expense.

However, it seemed different with Eleven there. It started out more careful; nobody tried to humiliate one another the first few rounds. Most people chose truth, which wasn't as interesting when there were no secrets between them.

Mike should have known better than to bring Eleven to a house with drunk, idiotic teen boys that were just looking to have fun no matter what it took. The beginning of the downhill slide for Mike that night started with Dustin.

"Okay, my turn," Dustin slurred a little, pushing himself upright from where he was laying on the floor. He looked around the group, at a buzzed Will and Mike, a sober Eleven, and a very drunk Lucas. He grinned a little. "Will. Truth or dare."

"Truth."

"No," Lucas quickly interjected. "You're not allowed more than three truths in a row." It was a rule they had decided upon as kids that had been enforced ever since. "You have to do dare."

"Is it his third or fourth?"

"Definitely his fourth," Lucas insisted. "You have to give him a dare."

"Alright," Dustin cleared his throat, pondering for a moment. Due to

his sickly past and the present bullying he suffered, they usually gave Will easy dares, things that weren't too stressful or humiliating. Will didn't want them to take it easy on him, but they couldn't help themselves. It was an instinct to shield Will from things.

"I got it," Dustin finally said, snapping his fingers at his own revelation. He grinned over at Will. "I dare you to kiss El."

Mike bit his tongue, literally, nearly drawing blood. He looked over at Will, who seemed stunned and confused. Dustin and Lucas were chuckling at Will's expression, and even at Mike's piercing glare. It was funny to them, but not to the other two boys.

"Come on. You're seventeen, Will. It's about time you had your first kiss," Dustin pushed, the alcohol blocking his usual ability to read the expressions of his friends. In his intoxicated mind, he was doing Will a favor by daring him to get his first kiss over with. Better to do it with a friend who wouldn't judge him if he was bad at it, Dustin figured. He would regret his stupid logic the next day.

"I don't-

"Don't be a chicken," Lucas prodded with a snort. "It's just Eleven, Will. It doesn't mean anything."

Mike could see it in her face that she was a little hurt by Lucas' comment. She didn't quite understand what he meant by "just Eleven," but it sounded wrong to her. As if Lucas didn't think of her like a woman, like he thought of other girls their age.

Mike knew better. He knew that Lucas thought of Eleven as a friend, like he thought of Mike or Dustin, and that was his intention behind the words. Regardless, it hurt Eleven because she didn't want to be just one of the guys anymore. She wanted to be a girl.

Will turned to Eleven, his hands rubbing down his legs nervously as he looked at her. His cheeks flushed a bright pink, and Mike felt his whole body tense. He was relieved, though, when Will rushed forward and kissed her on the cheek quickly before backing away again.

"No," Dustin tsked. "A real kiss, Byers. You're not seven. Do the dare or face the consequences."

Will groaned a little, distress in his eyes. He was nervous, shaking even, as he stared into Eleven's eyes. She could see that Will didnt want to kiss her and she wondered why. If Lucas was right and it meant nothing, what was he afraid of?

Mike, on the other hand, couldn't stand it any longer. He was on the opposite side of Eleven from Will, and he couldn't stop himself from intervening any longer. He reached around, taking Eleven's face in his hand gently. Will's eyes widened a little as Mike pulled her until she was facing him, and he kissed her in Will's place.

Hand planted on her jaw to hold her in place, Mike kissed her without holding back, without shame. He was just drunk enough to stop caring if they were watching him. Eleven's eyes were closed, her lips trying to keep up with the movements of his. Mike didnt end the kiss or pull away until Dustin said something.

"Jeez you two, get a room," he teased, laughing along with Lucas. Mike happenes to glance over at Will, who had turned his face away. Even though he looked the opposite direction, Mike could still see part of his face, the part that revealed the blush on his cheek and something that looked like disappointment in his eye. Maybe not disappointment, Mike thought. It kind of looked like envy.

His eyebrows furrowed. Will and Eleven had to spend a lot of time together because she was staying with him and going to school with him. Mike felt as though it was understood among the group that Eleven was his. Eleven had always been his.

Then again, Will had the least clear understanding of that since he wasnt around when Mike developed feelings for Eleven as a preteen. Maybe Mike hadnt made it clear enough to Will that Eleven was off limits to him, to everyone but Mike.

His expression softened as he realized he was letting his jealousy get the best of him. He had never been a possessive person, not with Lilly, not with anyone. It wasnt like him to feel threatened by his friends, and he didnt necessarily liked that seeing that jealousy in

Will's eyes stirred up something similar in himself.

"I'll be right back," Mike said, pushing himself up from the floor and heading to the kitchen. Eleven watched him leave, her lips still pink from their heated kiss. Her own face was flush now, but she couldn't help but feel like she did something wrong. Mike seemed upset before he left.

"That doesn't count," Lucas shook his head. "Will needs a new dare then."

"No, I'm done playing," Will decided, leaning back on his palms. "I never liked this game anyways, and I feel like we're getting too old."

"Don't blame the game for you being too chicken shit to kiss a girl," Lucas joked. He and Dustin chuckled a bit, but Will didn't find it funny. "You can't be a virgin forever, Will. I mean. You could, I guess, but that's not going to help you prove that you're not gay."

"Shut up, Lucas," Dustin warned. It was a sensitive subject, as the rumors about Will were the main reason he was bullied like he was. They weren't true, as far as any of his friends knew, and they knew better than to bring it up. Lucas would regret that comment once he was sober, but for the moment, he had no filter to stop him.

"Well it's true. They won't leave him alone if he never gets laid," Lucas muttered. Will hated when Lucas got too drunk. While he knew that Lucas would apologize profusely the next day, and his concerns came from a good place, Will hated when they brought it up. Part of the reason it upset him so is that he wasn't so sure his friends believed him when he denied the rumors.

"Fine, you want proof?" Will frowned.

"Will--"

"No, I'll prove it, then," he interrupted Dustin. Lucas watched in curiosity as Will inched closer to Eleven.

He hesitated for a moment, but eventually forced himself to go through with the stupid dare. He took Eleven's small face between his hands and pressed his lips against hers for a few moments. He didn't

move them, didn't invade the same way Mike did, but it was a rough and panicked sort of kiss. Eleven's eyes went wide, and her hands braced against his shoulders.

"That's my boy," Lucas jeered, patting Will on the back when he finally released Eleven. She sat back, hand flying up to touch her lips. A flurry of thoughts and feelings rushed through her. She didnt like it the same way she liked Mikes kisses, but she didnt hate it. Will got up, then stormed off.

"You're an idiot," Dustin told Lucas, taking away the open beer can in Lucas' hand, "and you're cut off."

"What? It was the truth," Lucas scoffed, trying to defend himself, although it was a sloppy defense.

Mike stayed in the hallway. He'd seen the whole thing, and while part of him worried about Will, another part of him was glad Will stormed off to the guest bedroom. He didnt want Will around Eleven at the moment. He was also concerned about Eleven, though he didnt know how to explain to her that Will didnt mean it or really want to do it without hurting her feelings. Mike didnt know how to tell her she wasnt the problem, Will's insecurities were.

Will leaned back against the door once it was closed. His fingers ran over his lips as he thought about the way it felt, the way her lips tasted. She was a girl, a real girl, and he had kissed her. A real kiss. His heart thudded away in his chest, making his breathing ragged and uneven. Oh what an idiot he was. It wasnt supposed to mean anything, but it did. He was supposed to be indifferent, but he wasnt. Will didnt know what to make of any of it.

12. Chapter 12

Hey guys! Please excuse the long authors note, but I wanted to say a few things :) there seems to be a lot of mixed feelings and TONS of misconceptions about this story, which is likely my fault lol. I try to subtly or openly explain the characters behaviors, feelings, etc. As best as I can but Ill just be clear about my feelings about this now :)

I want this story to be drastically different than Its Still You. That way it doesnt feel repetitive or stale for me to write. Tbh im low on ideas and muse for Its Still You, but I have many for this story. Its still new and fresh and Im enjoying it :)

That being said, many aspects of character and plot have to be totally different for the story to keep feeling fresh and new. No, Mike is not perfect in this story. Hes eighteen, and hes desperate to keep Eleven from being taken away again. He just got her back after all. Hes afraid of a lot of things that involve her and losing her and thats why he is acting the way he is. Hes also still kind of a kid. Hes learning.

Dustin and Lucas are also kids XD ive played many games of truth or dare with stupid dares, and thats all it was meant to be. They were drunk and thinking about how Will had never kissed anyone before. Friends tease each other. As I mentioned, they would realize their mistake when they sobered up lol

Also, there is going to be aspects of Will's crush on Eleven. He had never met her before, and is just now meeting her as a woman. However, never fret, its still a Mileven story :) its about Mileven. Its slower paced, as Mike is coming to grips with the fact that Eleven is back, and neither of them are little kids anymore. Its still new to him, and hes trying not to push too far too fast. Ive tried to include scenes with them though.

Basically, I understand if this story isnt your cup of tea :) it is different than the other, and hopefully different from ALL others lol. Im enjoying it, and Im going to stick with my ideas. If ya have faith in me, though, I promise you wont be disappointed ;)

anyways. Thanks for reading my long ass AN (if you did) and please do enjoy this update :) i appreciate your feedback, I really do. I hope I dont disappoint too many of you lovely people!

Chapter 12:

Mike was relieved when Dustin and Lucas finally fell asleep in Lucas' room. Dustin was comedically sprawled out on the floor with barely a blanket thrown over him, while Lucas had somehow just managed to make it to his bed.

It wasn't often that they drank so heavily, but it had been awhile. School was winding down to an end, and the speeches from parents and teachers about college and life plans had everyone a little stressed out. They needed a night to forget and let loose. Mike just wished he hadn't brought Eleven.

Will eventually called Johnathan to come pick him up, and once he was gone, it left Mike and Eleven alone. He didn't know how to bring it up to her, how to ask if she liked or hated Will's kiss. It felt too stupid, too trivial, to bother her with it.

"You okay?" He asked, settling down onto the sofa beside her. She was watching some stupid cartoons that Dustin left on, though she seemed pretty engrossed in them.

"Yes," she answered plainly, looking over at him for a moment. "Are you okay, Mike?" She repeated his question back at him, and Mike was surprised to find he didn't know how to answer. He was, but he wasn't. It seemed a little complicated to explain out loud.

"Hey, you know they're just being stupid, right? You don't have to take any of that stuff seriously." His cheeks were flush, eyes cast downward in self-understood shame. How immature he was being concerned him. It was so unlike him, or what he had always been before Eleven.

"Mike," she said his name softly, "you mean Will. Don't take... Will seriously. That's... what you mean?" She took her bottom lip between her teeth as she tried her best to understand the situation from Mike's

point of view though it was difficult for her.

Mike sighed, "Yes. Mostly. He was just upset. He didnt mean it."

"Did you?" She questioned.

"Of course," he frowned a little. "Of course I meant it. I did it because... because I didn't want Will to do it. I hated seeing him kiss you like that." Admitting it to her felt a little stupid, but he had no reason to lie to her. Odds were that she didnt fully understand the situation anyways.

"A kiss," Eleven pondered. "A kiss is serious?"

"Yeah," Mike nodded. "It usually means you really like someone. You... like them more than anyone else. And you want to be with them."

"Be with them?"

"Yes, like a couple." He was never very good at explaining things. He stumbled on his words and was usually too afraid or awkward to be as blunt as he needed to be. "How I like you... is serious. I want you, El, and I want you to be only mine. Do you understand?"

"A couple. You want me to be a couple?"

"Yes, well, I want us to be a couple. Just me and you. What i always wanted and... never thought Id get to have... with you." Mike sucked in a deep breath, then lifted his gaze to meet hers. "It's a feeling. In your chest. You get it when you like someone."

"In here." Eleven laid her hand over the center of her chest. "I feel it sometimes. Its heavy." She looked a little unhappy with the heavy feeling she was describing. "But it's good. I get happy when I feel it. Is that it?"

"Yeah," he nodded, smiling a little in response. "That's it."

"I feel it because of you. Do you feel it because of me?" She asked curiously, closing her fist with a handful of her shirt inside of it. Mike nodded again, inching a little closer to her. "Is that what it means

to... like someone?"

"Yes," he chuckled. "I like you. That feeling means you like me, too." He gently lifted her hand into his, turning it over to brush his thumb over her palm. "I missed you so bad for so long, El. Now that you're here... it feels like a dream. I feel so... happy. You have to forgive me when I'm afraid or anxious. I just don't want to lose you again."

Mike turned her hand back over and brought it up to his lips. He kissed it softly, eyes closed, hair tickling her wrist. Eleven took her bottom lip between her teeth.

"Mike."

"Hm?"

"Can you... kiss me again?" She asked him, her cheeks flush. Mike lifted his eyes to hers, brow furrowed in confusion. He hadn't expected her to outright ask for such a thing. He was surprised, but pleasantly so.

"I'm more than happy to," he told her, leaning in with his hand on her cheek as leverage. He pressed his lips to hers, tenderly at first, then a little harder. She was intoxicating, her taste, her natural perfume, all of it was so incredible to Mike. She was a forbidden fruit, now and always, but now she was there, in his arms, and he was tempted more than ever to take a bite.

Mike was in the process of laying her back when Lucas' phone rang. He let out a disappointed sigh, then pushed himself upright and headed to the kitchen. If it was Lucas' parents, he'd tell them their son was asleep upstairs with Dustin. Surely, they expected Mike and the other boys to be there while they were gone.

"Mrs. Sinclair?" Mike asked when he picked up the phone. He wished it had been such a simple thing. Instead, Will answered.

"Mike, keep Eleven there. Don't bring her here tomorrow," Will said frantically. "Hopper came by looking for her. He told Mom that the doctor is looking for her. You have to hide her. They can't take her back."

"Slow down," Mike said as calmly as he possibly could. "Just lie. Dont tell them we know anything. We'll take her somewhere secret tomorrow. Okay?"

"Mom said we didnt know anything, but I dont think Hopper believes us. I wouldnt. Whatever happens, we cant let them take her."

Mike had to admit that Will's desperation and panic mirrored his own, even if he didnt like it. It was becoming clearer and clearer to Mike that Will's feelings towards El may not be so platonic. He shouldve known. Eleven and Will had just met recently, and El was a beautiful girl. And she gave Will the time of day. Asking Will not to look at her like a woman was too much, and Mike knew it.

"We wont," he finally answered. "She's not going anywhere, Will. Just keep lying. Well figure it out in the morning. They cant prove anything."

"Be careful. Theyre looking all over. Turning over every stone."

"I know," Mike glanced back at the living room and lowered his voice. "We cant let Eleven know theyre after her. She may panic and run, or worse, try to do something about them. Hopper wont cover up a massacre, not even for El. If she panics, were in even worse trouble."

"I wont say anything."

"Good," Mike breathed. "We'll take care of it. If we all work together."

"Goodnight, Mike. Keep an eye out."

"Alright. You, too."

Mike hung up the phone, then lingered in the kitchen for a bit as he tried to find an easy, quick solution. He wouldnt let her go again. As a kid, he was useless, helpless, when it to save her. This time, he would do something. Or die trying.

13. Chapter 13

So close to season two! Hope you enjoy and happy binging! :D

Chapter 13:

Mike was nervous returning home. He imagined Brenner would be there, waiting for him, waiting to interrogate him. The weekend at Lucas' had been messy enough. He didn't want any more bad situations or conflict for at least a few days.

Luckily, there were no suspicious vans, no cars lingering outside his house, parked across the street to seem less conspicuous. His parents weren't even home. Even if they couldn't see anyone, Mike wasn't taking any chances.

They had borrowed a Peter Pan wig from one of Dustin's old Halloween costumes. They quickly put it on Eleven, and it looked convincing enough, even if they did a sloppy job. In addition to the wig, they put a jacket on her thick enough to hide the bumps where her breasts were under her clothes, as well as her feminine figure.

With her disguised, Mike walked her into the house as if nothing was happening, as if it was a friend on a normal day coming to visit. Once they were in the basement, Eleven pushed off the wig and slid her arms from the jacket, fanning herself once it was gone.

"I'm sorry. We had to hide you," Mike told her sympathetically. It was warm outside, and he knew it probably wasn't comfortable in that big jacket for her. "It's the only thing Lucas had at his house. His tee shirts wouldn't hide your... chest." He cleared his throat, making sure the curtains on the door were closed and all the blinds pulled down.

"Papa won't stop," she said as a warning, sitting down tiredly on the sofa across the room. She had laid on the sofa, so many years ago, when they were just kids and they thought she was crazy. It seemed so long ago now.

"I won't let him take you back there," he promised with a frown.

Eleven looked down at her lap with a look that told Mike she wasn't convinced. He walked over to her, kneeling down in front of her knees and taking her hands in his. He looked up at her. "I swear it, El. I won't let him lock you up. Not ever again. Do you understand? Never." He squeezed her hands.

"Promise?" She squeezed out, nervous tears building in her eyes. Mike wrapped his arms around her waist, laying his head in her lap and hugging her tightly.

"I promise, El. I swear." She stared down at his mess of black half curls for a moment, then lifted a timid hand to brush over it with her fingers. His hair was surprisingly soft, much softer than she expected. She ran her fingers through again, a little more confidently.

Mike closed his eyes, sinking into her touch. It was a simple gesture, and yet felt so amazing at the same time. Everything with her was amazing, and he hadn't gotten used to it. He didn't think he'd ever get used to her, and he didn't want to.

His arms pulled from her waist, hands resting on her thighs for a moment. He thumbed at the skin there, feeling how soft it was just under the hem of her shorts. Eleven shifted a little, and he got scared he was making her uncomfortable so he sat up.

"Sorry, El." He went to remove his hands, but she stopped them from leaving entirely. With a grip on his hands, and her bottom lip between her teeth, Eleven brought his hands back to her thighs. She placed them on the outside of her legs, holding them there.

"No. It's okay." She looked him in the eyes. Mike saw something in that look that he never expected to see in her eyes. It wasn't a look of innocence, or naivety. Eleven clearly wanted something, even if she didn't know what it was. Mike squeezed her a little, then dragged his hands down her thighs, pushing himself up from his knees to lean forward and kiss her heatedly.

Eleven let him lay her back without protest. When he climbed over her, she didn't argue or push him back. In fact, her hands balled into fists full of his tee shirt, pulling him down closer to her. For some reason she just wanted to be close. She wanted to be so close to him

that there was no empty space left between them.

Her lips were intoxicating to him. For a girl who never learned how to kiss, she picked it up quickly just by mimicking his motions. She had always been smart, and in that case it benefited him personally. She was soft, so soft, under his hands, under his lips. It felt like they were just going to melt together entirely.

Eleven let out a sharp gasp as she felt a pressure between her legs, pressure on a spot that seemed to be way more sensitive than anything else. She looked down to see his hand there, two fingers pressing into the fabric of her shorts.

"Mike?" She questioned, eyes wide and looking up at him. He kissed her cheek, her throat, her collar, silent for a moment. "Mike," she whined as he pushed his fingers around in a small circle. He finally lifted his shaggy head to meet her gaze.

"Do you want me to stop?"

It was a question she wasn't expecting. Eleven had hoped for another in depth explanation as to what was going on exactly, but he only offered that one question. She found it odd that the answer leapt from her lips before she could even think about it.

"No," she breathed.

He had held back for so long, and now that he could feel her heat under his touch, he was pushed beyond his limits. He had to feel her, at least a little. Mike brought his hand up, expertly pulling apart the button and zipper of her shorts. His hand slid slowly under her underwear.

"Mike!" She cried out a little, grabbing his hand. Her eyes were wide and frightened, so Mike paused for the moment. "What... does it feel like?"

"Good," he answered simply. "It'll feel good." Eleven pondered on that, then let out a breath and released his wrist. Mike's hand dipped lower, two fingers finding the little nub he knew would bring pleasure. He rubbed it gently, and she let out another gasp, then a

low moan. Her hands flew up to her mouth. It was most definitely a sound she never made before.

"It's okay," he chuckled. "No one's here." He rubbed a little more, into a slow, gentle circle, wanting her to get used to the feeling. Her eyes squeezed shut, hands clasp over her mouth even more desperately. "Is it good?" He asked, rubbing a little faster.

"Yes," she breathed out, dropping her hands from her mouth so she could breathe easier, which was a difficult enough task with the motion of his fingers. Her legs trembled and tried to close, though his shoulder kept them apart.

"Do you want me to go faster?"

"Mike," she whimpered, clinging to him now, bringing her head up to hide the expression on her face. Her cheeks were flush, lips parted slightly as she panted heavily. Mike continued to rub, faster and faster with each passing moment. She was shaking all over, a mixture of nerves and pleasure. "No," she whined as a strange, foreign feeling began to well within her. "No, no, no, Mike!"

Her whole body tightened, clenched together. She curled up into a ball as tightly as she could, folding onto Mike for dear life as waves of pleasure crashed over her like a restless tide. She bit down on her lip hard, forcing Mike to remove his hand with how tightly she brought her knees together. Mike sat back, watching her reaction for a moment.

She was breathless, blushing. It was a cute expression, he had to admit, and something he knew he could get easily addicted to. She brought her hands up to cover her face.

"I'm sorry, Mike."

"Sorry?" He smiled gently. "You don't have anything to be sorry for."

"What... what happened?" She asked bluntly, shaking her head. Mike reached forward to brush a hand through her hair to comfort her.

"Did you like it?" He asked instead of responding. Eleven looked up at him, hiding part of her face with her hands, then nodded.

"Yes."

"That's all that matters. I made you feel good. I can do it as much as you want. In a lot of different ways." She sat upright, dropping her hands into her lap.

"Is it something... for someone you like?"

"Yes. Only someone you really like." He took her hand in his. "We should probably get to bed. You want to stay on the couch tonight? Or in my bed with me?" She nodded, not connecting the idea that sharing a bed was a couple thing. She only wanted to be close to him. "Okay. Lets get to bed then." He smiled. Oh how she loved that smile.

"Okay."

14. Chapter 14

Im so happy you guys are enjoying the story :) im enjoying it too! Thanks so much for all the awesome reviews! Your feedback means so much, really :) i hope you enjoy the chapter.

Chapter 14:

Mike finally brought Eleven back to Will's house once Hopper stopped poking around. Joyce checked all of the lights and places she remembered Hopper checking before for bugs. It seemed safe, and Eleven certainly couldnt stay hidden in Mike's basement forever. It wasn't good for her, as much as he wished she could've stayed with him.

He was hesitant to leave her there alone in light of the things he was slowly finding out regarding Will. His friend early had some sort of feelings for Eleven, and that was a strange territory for any of them to navigate. Will was respectful, though, and Joyce would look after Eleven if nothing else.

When he had to go back home that night, it was a difficult goodbye. He'd been spoiled during his time with Eleven at his own house. Having her there, day and night, was wonderful. They had shared an intimate moment, and even shared a bed. Mike would miss having her warm, soft figure next to him at night. The bed would feel emptier than ever without her.

He kissed her cheek, brushed her curls back and told her goodbye. He wasn't smiling, though, which told Eleven that something was bothering him. Maybe it was the same thing bothering her, and Mike also wanted to stay there with her. However, even Eleven knew that it wouldnt happen since Mike's parents didnt know anything about her or the situation. They expected him home, so he had to go home.

"Ill stop by after school tomorrow, El," he promised waving goodbye. "When I drop Will off, I'll come in for awhile to see you." Eleven nodded at that,

"Okay. Bye, Mike."

"Bye, El." Mike glanced up at Will, who was sitting on the couch beside Johnathan as Mike and Eleven said their goodbyes. He nodded at his friend, then reluctantly left.

As he climbed into the car, he couldn't help but wish his own parents knew about everything that happened. It was dangerous for them to know, he understood that, but it also killed him inside that the only place Eleven didn't have to hide was Will's. He wished his own home could be comfortable for her, that she'd have her freedom and his parents' compassion, so she could stay there with him.

It just didn't work out that way, and he couldn't blame anyone but Brenner for the situation they were in. Mike was determined to fix it, somehow, without endangering anyone. Especially his family. Especially Eleven.

Will had little experience entertaining anyone. Growing up, it seemed like Johnathan was the one that always decided what they would do, usually picking things he knew Will would like. They were close, and Johnathan had always been one of his best friends as well as his brother.

He racked his brain, as Eleven stared out of the window in his bedroom, for something that might make her smile, if not forget about everything for a little while. It didn't make it any easier that she was a girl he had a little crush on, it only made him nervous.

"El?" He said softly. She turned her attention to him, and Will felt a familiar fluttering in his chest. He used to feel it every day, his freshman year, when Annie Wilson came into his algebra class. Until she moved, that is. "Um... do you like movies?"

"Movies..." She repeated the word like she was mentally searching for its definition. "I saw a movie with Mike before. It was fun," she finally answered with a shrug of her thin shoulders. Will smiled a little at her response, and the way things seemed so new and foreign to her.

"Want to watch a movie, then?"

"Okay," she nodded, pulling herself away from the window. If there was any way for sure to get her mind off the situation, a movie would definitely do it. He picked one of his favorite science fiction flicks, then put it in the VCR and let it rewind for a little while.

She seemed interested in the movie, but halfway through, Will could see her start to doze off. Her eyelids got heavy, and she curled up. He was not prepared, however, for her to curl up beside him and let her head fall onto his shoulder.

Will swallowed hard, looking down at her sleeping face. He knew she probably didn't even realize she had fallen asleep on his shoulder, but he didn't want to wake her for fear she would move away from him. For a zombie boy, who never had a girlfriend in all his years of high school, this was an experience he wasn't sure he'd ever get, so it was important not to ruin it.

She breathed softly, chest rising and falling in rhythm. Eleven clung to the blanket he'd given her like she was cold, so he carefully grabbed another with his free arm and tossed it around her shoulders. Mike would be unhappy, if he were to see the two of them.

It wasn't Eleven's fault she fell asleep, and Will couldn't move out from under her head without waking her. Surely Mike would understand. Will just didn't want to wake her. At least, that's what he told himself.

Mike had to admit that it came as a relief to see Lilly teasing Dustin by his locker like she used to when they were together. She had always been a pleasant person, and Dustin and Lucas got along with her well. Even seeing her smile, made him feel a little better about his decision. Dustin shooed her off playfully, then headed down the hall towards Mike.

"Hey, you happen to see Will today?" Dustin asked, slinging his bookbag over his shoulder lazily. "I didn't see him this morning by the buses. I didn't know if you picked him up."

"No," Mike shook his head. "I haven't seen him either."

"Think he's dodging Troy?" Dustin asked, his smile fading into a

frown. "I hear Troy got embarrassed because Lilly found out he was bullying Will and smacked him around in the middle of class. I bet Will is worried Troy thinkshe snitched to Lilly."

"Maybe he's just sick?" Mike shrugged. "Or maybe..." he trailed off as another possibility crossed his mind. "You dont think they found Eleven do you?"

"No, he'd tell us."

"What if they took Will, too?" Mike looked around the hallway, then lowered his voice. "We promised to keep out of their business. If they caught Will hiding Eleven, maybe they're punishing him, too." Mike grinned. "Let's skip and go check on them."

"Im sure it's fine, Mike."

"Yeah. Maybe." Mike threw his books into his locker and snagged his keys. "I'm not taking any chances. You didn't see her there, Dustin. They kept her blindfolded, and she was so skinny, like they weren't feeding her enough. Or she was refusing to eat. Im not sure. It just wasn'tgiid, and Im not letting her go back there. You coming or not?"

"Screw it, I hate Ms. Wallace anyways." Dustin let out a sigh. "Lets go before I change my mind." Mike slammed his locker, and the two of them headed for Mikes car. They could fill Lucas in later depending on how things went.

Mike was in some ways relieved as he pulled into the Beyers' driveway. He and Dustin climbed out of the car, watching for a moment as Eleven sat across from Will in the grass, crisp, fall colored leaves floating around them, spinning, orbiting around where they sat.

Eleven was smiling, and Will was laughing. Mike would have been lying if he denied the small pang of jealousy in his chest.

"Mike!" Eleven's voice called out. The leaves floating around them fell swiftly as she jumped up to her feet. She rushed to Mike, throwing her arms around his waist and hugging him tightly. "You came to see

me."

"I had to make sure you were okay," he told her with a grin, patting her head gently. "Seems like you're doing just fine here."

"It's nice," she nodded her head against his chest. "I like it here, but I wish you could stay, too." Mike looked over Eleens head at Will, who was on his feet now, cheeks flushed and eyes avoiding Mikes. Maybe he was ashamed of how much he was enjoying that moment, or maybe he was afraid of being scolded by his friends for not showing up to school. Mike couldn't be sure.

"Me, too, El," Mike sighed, rubbing her back. "Will, how come you stayed home?" Mike asked to go ahead and get it out of the way. "Is everything okay?"

"Yeah," Will nodded, finally meeting Mikes gaze. "I just... figured with Mom and Johnathan gone, Eleven might be lonely. It's not like I can take her to school with me anymore."

"Probably a good idea. It doesn't seem smart to leave her alone with those assholes looking for her," Dustin chimed in. "I can skip tomorrow, and she can hang out at ."

"We should just take her to school," Mike shrugged. "I doubt that Brenner is going to check the school. He's probably assuming we're not that stupid."

"He's overestimating us," Dustin joked. "I'm not sure it's a good idea to take her to school, but I do agree with Will that she shouldn't be left alone either."

"My mom is writing a sick letter to the school. It'll buy me a few days," Will shrugged. "Maybe by then we can take her with us."

"Hopefully," Mike muttered under his breath. "So she's staying here then? And you're staying with her for a few days?" He didn't like it, but he didn't have a better plan. "I'll stay one day, too. Dustin can stay another."

"You don't have to," Will frowned, his cheeks reddening again.

"Oh, I hate school, so i dont mind skipping a little. I can tell them I got food poisoning. Or caught Will's sickness. Just tell me what lie youre going with. I can match it."

"Okay," Will nodded, giving in. "Im sorry I didn't call you before. You should get back to school." He headed towards his front door. "Come on, El, we can watch another movie."

"Okay," Eleven sighed, squeezing Mike lightly before letting go and heading for the door.

"Ill be back after my last class," Mike called to Will and Eleven both. "See you both then."

"See you, Mike!" She beamed back to him, excited that he'd be coming back soon.

Mike watched her disappear through the door and he couldnt help ut want to hit something. His chest ached with stupid jealousy, jealousy he despised but couldnt control. He needed to talk to Will. Boundaries needed to be set.

"She'll be alright, Mike," Dustin tried to reassure his friend, moving to the passenger door of Mikes car. "Just come back after school."

"Yeah," he grumbled. "I plan on it."

15. Chapter 15

Hey guys! I just want to apologize first for any typos and mistakes throughout the story. I have to write it on my phone at the moment because my laptop isn't working. My phone doesn't make it easy to catch mistakes and sometimes even when I type something correctly, my phone changes it to something else. I don't know it's dumb. But my apologies :) I'll try my best to catch my mistakes.

Also, I know you guys had to wait a ridiculously long amount of time for this chapter. My apologies again. I've been dealing with some mental health stuff I ignored for a long time, and we also lost our family dog that we've had for 15 years so it's been a bad month. Anyways, I'm back and going to start updating regularly again. Please enjoy the chapter!

Chapter 15:

Hopper sat outside of the Byers home, puffing mindlessly on a cigarette. He sighed lowly as Will came from the house with Eleven trailing behind him. Of course, he had expected the boys to be hiding her somewhere, at one of their houses. His first guess was the Wheeler residence, but he never saw her there.

It upset him to think that Joyce didn't trust him enough to tell him the truth, but then again, maybe he deserved her mistrust after hiding Eleven in the first place. Even if he had done so with the best intentions, he knew how it seemed to the others.

Hopper climbed out of the car and approached Will, who froze the moment he saw him. Will grabbed Eleven's arm and tugged her behind him, a gesture that threw Hopper off considering how much more powerful Eleven was realistically. Yet Will was trying to protect her.

"Listen, son," Hopper sighed. "The longer you hide her, the more danger you're putting yourself in." He took a step towards them, and Will stepped back. "I have to take her back. Brenner isn't going to

stop until they bring her back to the lab."

"She's not going back," Will argued, shaking his head. "She deserves better, Hopper. You know that. You have to know that."

"Of course I know," Hop muttered. "It's not a choice I want to make. However, if her living her days out in that lab keeps the rest of you safe, then that is what has to happen."

"Screw that," Will said defiantly, eyes wide with worry but also full of determination. He grabbed Eleven by the arm then, and took off running.

Eleven stumbled a bit at first, but she quickly matched his pace and ran along behind him. Will planned to take her to Mike's first, then to hop into his car and take her somewhere else. She had to be moved. She wasn't safe at any of their houses anymore.

Mike was surprised when Will came knocking frantically at the basement door. He opened it, and Will came rushing in, hand still holding onto Eleven's. Mike chose to ignore that fact for the moment, since they were panting so hard from running.

"We have to go," Will urged, finally letting go of Eleven's hand. "Mike, we have to hide her. Somewhere else. Hopper knows we have her, and if he knows, Brenner is going to find out." Mike looked at Eleven, whose eyes were wide and watery. Her chest heaved from the long run, and he wished he could calm her somehow.

"Alright." Mike snatched up his jacket and keys. "Let's go." This time, as Mike went out of the door, he took Eleven's hand. He walked with her at his side, holding onto her tightly, and only let go so she could climb into the backseat of the car.

"Where do we go? Where can we go?" Will asked as he walked around to the passenger's seat. Mike sighed and climbed in. Once they were seated and buckled in, Mike started his old car as quickly as he could. It stuttered a little, then grumbled to life.

"Mike," Eleven whined from the back seat. "If Papa knows... you'll be

in danger."

"Don't worry about me, El," Mike said softly, speeding out of his driveway. Will grabbed onto the door handle to brace himself. "Should we grab Dustin and Lucas?"

"No, it's better if they don't know where she is," Will shook his head, his messy mop of brown hair falling into his eyes. He ran his hand back through it to clear his vision. "Nobody but us should know. That way... no one else can take the blame."

Mike looked over at Will. Even though he agreed, the fact that Will so fearlessly threw himself into the line of fire to protect Eleven only solidified his belief that Will had feelings for her. It caused an ache in his chest that he'd been trying his hardest to get rid of.

Mike used some of the money he saved after working at the arcade all summer to buy a hotel room for a few nights. It was on edge of town and isolated. It would buy them some time to figure out something better.

There were two beds, and while they would have loved to argue over who shared the bed with Eleven, ultimately they decided that Eleven should have a bed to herself. Mike and Will had shared a bed before so it wasn't a big deal.

Will had fallen asleep first, and Eleven had gone into the bathroom to change. As she opened the door to step out, she bumped into Mike's firm chest. He backed her into the bathroom with his larger frame, then pushed the door closed behind them.

"Mike?" She questioned, looking up at the serious expression on his face with concern. Instead of answering with words, he took her small face in his hands and kissed her long and deep. As she usually did, Eleven mirrored his movements in order to keep up with him.

He bent down to grab her by the thighs, hoisting her onto the sink. Mike pulled back from the kiss to look her in the eyes, shaking his curls from his view so he could see her clearly.

"Are you okay?" He asked softly, brushing her hair from her face. Eleven nodded, still searching his eyes for a clue as to what was going on inside that mess of curls.

"Yes," she told him after a moment. "I'm fine. Are you?"

"Of course," he answered a little too quickly. Eleven frowned at him.

"Friends don't lie. You taught me that."

"El," he sighed, resting his hands on her waist. "It's really stupid to begin with. Don't make me say it out loud."

"Say it. Please," she whined, grabbing handfuls of his shirt.

"It's just," he muttered, dropping his head in shame. "Will I... be the only one you like, El? Will it always be me?" She blinked a couple times.

"What do you mean?"

"Will... he likes you, too," Mike explained, lifting his gaze to meet hers. "He has feelings for you like I do. It makes me feel so... It's stupid. I know it is, but I'm still so scared of losing you."

"You won't. I am not leaving," she reassured him as much as she could. "Mike." She pulled him closer so she could lay her head against his chest. "Will is my friend. Will does not feel anything. He does not touch me like you. He does not do the things you do."

"Well, I would hope not," Mike chuckled a little. She was still so naive, but it might have been better that way. "I just want to be the only one to you, El. Will is... a good guy. He deserves to be happy, but I... I'm too selfish to let him have my happiness." He kissed the top of her head.

Eleven wrapped her arms around him to hug him a little tighter, her cheek pressing into his chest a little more. She didn't understand entirely what Mike was so afraid of, but she wanted to comfort him. She wanted to make him smile and feel good no matter what was bothering him.

While she was deeply worried about being found by Papa and taken back to the lab, she ultimately wanted to protect and look out for Mike. Will, too, but Mike was the one Papa would target. Mike had stolen her away, and Papa would blame him.

Even if Papa found her, she knew she would kill him before she let him hurt the people she loved. Papa didn't have any power over her anymore. She wasn't in the dark, and he couldn't blind her anymore. As long as she could see him, she could fight him, and she was ready for a fight.

Will woke from a nightmare, forehead sticky with sweat and chest rising and falling rapidly with panicked breaths. He threw his legs over the side of the bed, running his hands down his face despite the sweat.

He looked up once his heart started to slow, and no sooner as it calmed down did it start to ache again. Mike and Eleven were laying together on the other bed. Mike had his arm thrown over her as they laid facing each other.

Will ran his hand through his damp hair again, then headed into the bathroom. Once the door was closed, he leaned back against it and let out a breath. He should be able to control his silly heart, but it was easier said than done.

Eleven loved Mike. Mike loved Eleven. Will shouldn't even want to come between them, but he did. He just had to control himself. He had to.

16. Chapter 16

Chapter 16:

Eleven woke first. She always slept a little better with Mike by her side, but she was still not immune to memories plaguing her as nightmares when she was asleep. She sat up, just as the sun was barely peeking over the horizon, shining a thin strip of light through the curtains over the window.

She rolled over to see Mike, and she couldn't help but smile softly. He was attractive, even while he slept. Mike had grown into quite the man while she was gone. It was hard not to admire his features as he laid there in a peaceful slumber.

Her attention shifted over to the other bed as she heard the blankets rustle. Will sat up, too, likely plagued by similar nightmares as Eleven. They had both been to the same awful place and came out alive.

"You're up early," Will commented casually with a sleepy, half-hearted smile. She just nodded, not sure what to say in response. "Are you hungry, El?"

"A little," she admitted, stretching her arms above her head. Will couldn't help but watch the way her back arched as she stretched much like a cat. His cheeks flushed, and he turned his attention away from her entirely.

"I'll go by the vending machine, then," he cleared his throat. He bent down to retrieve his shirt from the floor, slipping it on over his head. "I'll be right back."

Will climbed out of bed, then ventured towards the door to their room. He didn't know exactly what she liked, but he had a few dollars to get a few different things. Hopefully, he'd get at least one thing she'd like. Everything else he and Mike could eat.

It was admittedly strange, staying in a hotel room with Mike and Eleven, considering the two of them were pretty much dating. The

fact that Will had a slowly blossoming crush on Eleven only made things worse.

Still, it wasn't about being comfortable, it was about keeping Eleven safe.

Once Will grabbed some snacks from the machine, he headed back to the room. Mike was up and moving around when he got back. He and Eleven were busy packing their things.

"We're leaving already?" Will asked, setting the snacks down on the table.

"Yeah. It's better if we keep moving," Mike answered as he buttoned up his shirt. "They'll know my car, and if they see it outside a motel, they'll know to come looking for us. I have an idea, though, but we'll need to borrow your camping gear."

"Sure. We can run back by the house, and I'll grab it."

"No, we need to get ahold of one of the guys. Someone will have to bring it to us. Hopper is still at your house with your mom, more than likely. His idiot deputies are probably out looking for us." He let out a long sigh.

Mike wasn't used to having to come up with survival plans right off the top of his head, but he was doing the best he could considering. There was only so much a high school boy could get away with in such a small town, and they didn't have much money between them.

Will didn't argue. Mike was right anyways, but he wished they would at least eat something before jumping back into the fugitive game.

Once they had everything gathered, they left the room. Mike went to return the key, while Will walked Eleven around the back of the building to where they parked the car.

Unfortunately, as they rounded the corner, a very real threat was waiting for them.

"Well, well, if it isn't Byers and the little freak," Troy snorted, his posse of two boys behind him. "I thought this was Mike's car, so

what're you doing here? With her?" He pointed at Eleven. "Isn't she Mike's new thing? The bitch he dumped my cousin for."

"What do you want, Troy?" Will asked in annoyance. There were more important things to worry about than some schoolyard bullies like Troy and his friends.

"Honestly, I was expecting Mike. He thought he could get away with cornering me. I was here with some friends anyways. Figured I'd give him a little payback for that lame suckerpunch." Troy tapped the hood of Mike's car. "I didn't expect you to be here, Byers."

"Two for one," one of the other boys chuckled.

Eleven stepped forward, ready to just end Troy right then and there, but Will caught her by the wrist. He tugged her back, behind him, as gently as he could.

Mike finally rounded the corner, and he halted as soon as he saw the three boys surrounding his car. His teeth began to grind together angrily. They didn't have time for any of this. They needed to run.

"Leave us alone, Troy. You're the least of my worries today," he said through his teeth. Troy and his friends chuckled mockingly.

"He thinks he's big and bad now, boys," Troy clicked his tongue.

"Bigger and badder than someone who has to bring two other guys to defend him," Mike shot back in frustration. "Get out of here, Troy. Everyone knows why you assholes drive out here. You smell like shit. Don't make me call Hopper."

Mike had never been fond of the smell of marijuana. It had never been a smell he could get used to, though Troy came to school with that odor in his clothes and hair more often than anyone could count. He and his friends were all pot heads as far as anyone was concerned.

"Always need someone else to come save your ass," Troy tsked. He pulled a switchblade from his back pocket, then flicked the blade out to show them.

Eleven tried to wring her arm free of Will's grasp, but he just held on

tighter. If she got involved, it would only make things worse. Hopper would be called, and they didn't want that. Hopper planned to take Eleven away after all.

"Well, you won't be running away anymore, chicken shit," Troy said as he stabbed his knife into Mike's front tire.

Mike leapt forward, shoving past Will to push Troy back violently.

"What the hell, Troy?!" He snapped angrily, shoving the older boy again, a little harder this time. "What's your fucking problem?!"

One of the other boys grabbed Mike by the arm to pull him off Troy. Troy took the opportunity to slice a hole into Mike's back tire as well. Both tires deflated, leaving the car to tilt.

Mike went to wrestle with the boy, but he was suddenly yanked back. There were no hands on him, no one dragging him by force. No, it was Eleven. He fell back on his rear, then looked up at her in confusion. He didn't know why she'd pull him back instead of removing Troy from the situation.

"Lights," she pointed around the corner of the building.

Faintly, they could see blue flashing lights glinting off of the windows. Will knelt down to help Mike up to his feet. They both shot glares in Troy's direction, but there was no time to retaliate. Hopper's idiot deputies were there to look for them.

"We'll settle this next time," Mike grumbled. He shoved by Troy to grab what he needed from the car. Then, he grabbed Eleven's hand, and they all darted for the woods behind the motel.

"That's right, Wheeler!" Troy yelled after them. "Run away!"

Mike wanted nothing more than to turn around and make Troy regret every stupid thing he ever did for the sake of trying to scare someone. He was a bully, but not even a good one. Mike knew he could lay him out if given the chance, but he had more important things to think of, like protecting Will and Eleven.

"What do we do now?" Will asked, once they were far enough away

from the motel. "We have no vehicle to get around in. They're hunting us down."

"We'll figure it out. Even if we have to double back into town to get Dustin and Lucas. They aren't going to catch us." Mike let out a groan of frustration, then ran a hand back through his hair. "I'll figure something out, Will. Don't worry."

"We just can't let them take her," Will shook his head. "We can't, Mike."

"I know," he sighed. "We won't."

A/N: Whoa it's been a long time. I hit a bit of a rough patch lol, which honestly I'm still in. Sometimes the universe just likes to make people suffer. But it's getting better, slowly. I started college again, which sucks, but hey summer is coming up soon, and I can write a lot more :)

I'm sorry if this chapter isn't great, but I gotta get back into the flow of the story :) I wanna update more often now. I missed you guys! Anyways, if you're still reading, thank you, and I'm so sorry. Look forward to more soon!

17. Chapter 17

Chapter 17:

Eleven couldn't help but feel like she was sick of running and hiding. She had been doing so for so long, and it put everyone around her in danger. From the moment Mike broke her out of the lab, they had been running. Part of her wanted to just end it herself, but Mike had already told her that she would draw attention if she used her powers.

The dry leaves crunching under their feet was the only sound between the three of them for awhile, as they walked through the woods. Will led the way, while Mike tugged Eleven along by the hand. None of them really knew what to do, and it hardly seemed worth all the trouble to Eleven. She was making their lives difficult, and she felt guilty about it.

"Mike," she finally said his name softly. He paused, as did Will, and they both looked back at her with a little concern in their eyes.

"What is it, El?"

"Maybe I should... go back." She furrowed her brow and dropped her gaze to her feet. "Too much trouble... just for me."

"Don't say that," Will frowned. "It's not too much. We can handle it."

"You're not going anywhere." Mike leaned down and cupped her small face between his hands. He tilted her head up so that he could look in her eyes. "We're going to take care of you, El. Just trust us. Okay? We want to do this."

"Papa could hurt you," she pouted. Mike couldn't help but think how cute she was, even when she was pouting. "Mike, it's not safe."

"Don't worry about me," Mike chuckled, dropping his hands from her face. He locked his fingers with hers, then began walking again. "We're in this together. As soon as we can get to a phone booth, I'm going to call Dustin. If we stay moving, we'll be alright."

Eleven let out a long sigh, then stepped in time with Mike. He wasn't going to let her go, no matter what. Even if she sacrificed herself and went back to the lab on her own, he would only stage another rescue. Mike was stubborn when it came to Eleven. He loved her too much to ever let her be taken away again.

Will walked along behind him. It was becoming more and more clear as the days went on that there was no one in Eleven's eyes but Mike. Even though it hurt, he knew he had to accept that. She was always Mike's girl, and she always would be. If Will wanted to be close to her, he had to be close to her as a friend. He was beginning to understand that.

It took awhile, a long while, but they finally made it to town. Will ran out to the nearest street to use a payphone and call Dustin. Lucas didn't have a car of his own yet, but Dustin did. If anyone could come get them, it was him.

They were all relieved when they climbed into Dustin's beat up old Ford. The trio had walked so far just to get to a phone they could use, and they were all exhausted. Dustin turned on the air conditioning to try and cool them off a little.

"I wish you would have told us where you were going," Dustin furrowed his brow in concern. "We were all super worried. Johnathan was about to start calling around every business we could think of to ask if they'd seen you."

"It's been a long day," Mike breathed, laying his head back against the seat. "Give me a hard time about it later, please. Not right now."

"Okay," Dustin frowned. He looked in the mirror at Eleven and Will in the back seat. They were both toppled over against the doors, half asleep already. "Stay at my place for tonight. Hop's already been by to check it out, so you should be safe there just for a night."

"Your parents out of town?"

"Yeah," Dustin nodded. "I'll call over Lucas, too. We can try to figure out something more permanent, but you guys can at least relax and

eat there."

"Thank you, Dustin," Eleven muttered sleepily from the back seat.

"Yeah, no problem."

He drove straight to his house, then woke up his three tired passengers to get them inside. Even if Hopper wouldn't come back just yet, Dustin knew the people from the lab were out looking for her, too. Staying out too long with them wasn't safe.

Once they were inside, he got each of them a glass of water and bowl of cereal. He didn't know when the last time they ate was, but everyone needed to keep their strength for the next few days, or weeks. Or even months. Honestly, Dustin didn't know when it would end.

Will went to bed first. He slept on the couch with a blanket that Mike threw over him. Lucas arrived a couple of hours later, and they all sat around the kitchen table together.

"We need a more permanent solution," Lucad noted. "We can't keep going on like this, Mike. We need a better plan."

"I know," Mike threw his head back and groaned in frustration. "I wish Hopper was on our side. If he was helping us, this would be so much easier. Eleven said the government isn't helping the lab anymore, not after the fiasco with Will."

"Covering up a crime with a fake body doesn't go over well with the bosses, I'm sure," Dustin chuckled. "Especially when they got caught."

"If they're an independent operation, then it's over if we get rid of them, isn't it?" Lucas asked, leaning forward on the table with his elbows. "If they're not a problem, then Hopper isn't a problem. Does Hopper know they're working alone?"

"Probably not," Mike shrugged. "Doesn't work well for them to tell him."

"He doesn't," Eleven answered, her head laid down on her arms. Her eyes were just barely open, her voice little more than a whisper. Mike

watched her for a moment, watched the way her eyelids drooped and her body relaxed.

"Where should we sleep?" He asked Dustin.

"You two can sleep in my parent's room," Dustin shrugged.

"Thanks." Mike stood, then gently coaxed Eleven to her feet. "Come on. Let's get you to bed." Once she was upright, he turned and scooped her up onto his back. It would be easier just to carry her after all of the walking they did that day.

Mike carried her to Dustin's parents' bedroom. The bed was made up, so he peeled the blankets back before setting her down on the mattress. Eleven slid her legs under the covers, then relaxed into the pillow with a satisfied hum.

"I'll join you soon," he promised her, dragging the blankets up over her shoulder to ensure that she would stay warm. Eleven was much too tired to do it herself. Mike smiled softly, then brushed her hair back from her face. "Sleep tight, El."

As he turned to leave, he felt a small hand suddenly wrap around his wrist to stop him. Mike turned to see Eleven propped up on her elbow now, staring up at him.

"Don't leave," she pleaded quietly. "Stay. For a minute."

"Alright," he sighed, sitting on the edge of the bed by her legs. "You should sleep, Eleven. We'll figure out this whole mess tomorrow."

"Good. I don't want to go away again. I'll miss you. I'll miss all of you." Eleven hadn't known friendship before Mike and the others. She had always been alone, always been used as a weapon, not treated as a child. Now that she was grown, Mike was teaching her even more things. They all were. Eleven never wanted it to end; she wanted to keep learning, to be normal.

"We won't let you go, El," Mike shook his head. "You don't have to be afraid."

"I'm not. I'm just... tired. I don't want to run anymore." She curled her

knees up to her chest. "I want ti go back to school. I want to stay friends with Will and Dustin and Lucas."

"Not me?" Mike teased her playfully.

"Mike is... more than a friend," she giggled half-heartedly. "Remember?"

"I remember," he grinned down at her. Mike leaned over to press a tender kiss to her soft lips. "Go to sleep. El. Youll need your rest." He kissed her again, then sat back to wait for her to fall asleep.

"Goodnight." She brought her fingertips up to graze them over her lips where Mike's kiss still tingled her skin. "You need sleep, too."

"I'll sleep," he promised. That answer seemed to satisfy her. She laid back, brought her hands to her chest, then slowly fell asleep. Mike stayed with her for a little while longer, then got up to join Dustin and Lucas at the table again. They had important matters to discuss.

I'm so glad you guys are still here! And I'm glad you guys still want to read :) thanks so much for all of the amazing reviews. I do really appreciate each and every one. Enjoy the update guys!

18. Chapter 18

Chapter 18:

Mike rolled over almost immediately after he woke the next morning. He was grateful to find Eleven still in the bed next to him. She had been awake, her tired eyes lifted to meet his as they opened for the first time that morning.

"Did you sleep alright?" He asked her groggily, reaching up to brush her hair from her face. Eleven nodded her head, then stretched her arms over her head in a way that stirred up Mike's desires. It felt like it had been so long since he touched her that way. They had been running for too long.

He traced the curve of her body with his hand, letting it slide up under the baggy tee shirt she wore. She let out a soft hum, then closed her eyes again. Being touched by Mike, even if the most innocent of ways, brought her great comfort.

"Did you... sleep okay?" She asked in a breath, forcing her eyes open again to look up at him.

"I slept fine. In fact, I wish I could sleep like this for the rest of my life," he smiled sweetly, brushing his thumb over her ribs while his hand sat there. Her skin was so soft, it always had been. It seemed to only get softer as she got older. Or maybe Mike just touched her more while they were both older.

Mike was a little surprised when Eleven leaned in to kiss him. She didn't instigate kisses often, but when she did, it set a fire ablaze in his gut. His hand went to her hair, his fingers burying in the chocolate waves as he deepened the kiss for her, allowing his tongue to coax out hers.

He could have stayed like that all day. His hand dropped from her ribs to make contact with her thigh. Mike dragged his fingers along it, higher and higher, until he reached that tender spot that he hadn't explored enough.

Eleven broke the kiss with a sharp gasp, then turned her gaze to him. She had no intention of complaining, but it did catch her a little off guard. She remembered that feeling, and what kind of pleasure being touched in such a way could bring.

Mike wrapped his free arm around her to tug her closer, then opted to roll on top of her altogether. It made it easier for his fingers to do as they wanted, to dip low and curl into her in a way that caused her to whimper in pleasure.

"Do you want me to stop?" He asked, dropping his shoulder so he could reach just a little deeper into her. Eleven arched her back in response, biting down on her lip to keep from making a noise. They were, after all, just next door to where Lucas was sleeping.

"N-No."

"Then I won't," he grinned, leaning down to silence her with a kiss. He moved his lips against hers as his fingers moved back and forth. He wanted to feel her with more than just his hand, but the time hadn't come yet. These things needed to be introduced slowly.

Even though Eleven was a woman in age and body, she had spent most of her life locked away, with minimal contact with the outside world. There were no magazines or television to learn the ins and outs of relationships from, especially not when it came to sex.

Still, part of him didn't mind taking it slow. He knew when the moment came that he could have her the way he wanted, it would be well worth the wait.

Dustin wasn't the best cook, but he did manage to scrape together some eggs and mishapen pancakes the next morning. He knew how difficult things were for Will, Mike, and Eleven, and he wanted to do something nice for them, even if it was only breakfast.

He set his ugly pancakes and eggs on the table, then went to wake everyone up. He wasn't startled at first when he didn't find Will on the couch where he had gone to sleep the night before. In fact, he remembered Will getting up to go sleep in the spare room before

Dustin ever went to bed. The couch was a little lumpy, so it was understandable.

Dustin knocked on his own bedroom door first, then leaned in to call for Lucas to get up. Lucas sat up from his pile on the floor with a tired frown, then rubbed at his eyes. With a less than pleased groan, Lucas got up to join Dustin in the kitchen as requested.

Dustin moved down the hall, knocking on his parents' door next.

"Just a minute," Mike called back.

"I made breakfast, so just come eat whenever," Dustin scrunched his nose. Part of him didn't want to think of what they had done or might be doing in his parents bed. He just shook the thoughts from his head and walked to the guest room.

He knocked on the door loud enough to hopefully waking the sleeping Will inside.

"Hey, Will. Get up. Come eat." Dustin waited a second, but there was no sound on the other side of the door, no response. "Byers, get your ass out of bed, or I'll drag you out myself." He knocked again, a little louder than before.

When he was still met with nothing but silence, Dustin pushed open the door. The bed had obviously been slept in, but it was empty now. More concerning was Will's backpack, which had been left on the floor. Dustin furrowed his brow, then hurried across the hall to the bathroom. The door was cracked, and the light was off. No one was inside.

"Shit, shit, shit," he cursed, rushing back to his bedroom, where Lucas had slept. "Guys! I can't find Will!"

"What do you mean you can't find him?" Lucas asked, stepping out of Dustin's bedroom. "Didn't he move back to the spare room last night?"

"Yes, I know that, but he's not there. His stuff is, but he's not." Dustin went back to knock on the door to alert Mike. "Get up, we have to find Will." After a couple of seconds, Mike yanked the door open with a confused and concerned expression.

"Will is missing?"

"Before we start freaking out, let's check outside," Lucas suggested. "Maybe he went out for a walk or something." Of course, it wasn't like Will to leave without telling anyone, or to opt to be outdoors. No, it wasn't like him at all, but they had to try. If they couldn't find him, it meant something was terribly wrong.

Will let out a grunt as he hit the floor. He sat up to look around the empty white room he had been tossed into, and he had to wonder if this was the same kind of room they kept Eleven locked in her entire life.

"Ah, Mr. Byers," a grey-haired man stepped forward between the two armed guards that threw him into the room. "How kind of you to join us."

"What do you want with me?" Will asked, slowly pushing himself to his feet. He didn't want to move too fast and make the men with guns nervous. Will had no intentions of getting shot that morning if he could avoid it.

"Well, we know how much trouble your friends and family went through to save you before, even when everything pointed to you being dead," Brenner told him honestly. "We are hoping for that same determination this time."

"You're trying to get them to trade Eleven for me?" Will scoffed.

"Our men drive by you and your friends' houses every morning in hoped of spotting something. When we saw you outside, well... It makes our jobs a little easier." Brenner clasped his hands together behind his back and pace to the right a little. "We know well enough that Eleven was likely right there in that house, but it would have been a messy struggle. She is powerful, and all the pushing I've done throughout the years has only made her more powerful."

"You were afraid you'd lose if you went in after her," Will grimaced. "As you should be. She is strong, and you'll be lucky if she doesn't tear you limb from limb."

"She is human, too, Will Byers. She loves, she hurts. If we force her to turn herself in to spare you and Michael Wheeler, then she won't fight us. She will come home, where she belongs, willingly." Brenner paused to turn back to Will. "She knows how to play the part of sacrificial lamb well."

"Mike won't let her do that," Will shook his head. "They'll find another way, I can promise you that."

"Perhaps. Either way, they will come for you. And we will be ready." Brenner nodded a goodbye, then left the room. The door closed behind him, and the lock clicked from outside.

Will sat back down on the floor, propping his elbows up on his knees. It would be a waiting game, he knew that, but he couldn't help but hope they hurried anyways. The less time he had to spend with the people who faked his death once already, the better.

19. ANNOUNCEMENT

Hello my lovely readers!

I have a bit of an announcement/statement to make.

It really means the world to me that you guys have read and continue to read my Stranger Things fanfiction. I love the show, and I love writing for you guys. However, I have to be totally honest here. After I finished the first two stories, I started to run out of steam. I was able to keep going for a little while because the idea was still new, but then I lost the muse for this story. For all stories, really. I hit a rough patch right before college started, and I picked up a new interest that REALLY makes me happy.

So I started writing for the group that I fell in love with on Wattpad to cheer myself up on bad days. I admit that I literally never left that little safety bubble, and that was probably wrong of me. I shouldn't leave you guys in the dark when you've been so supportive.

After I got past that phase, I tried to keep writing "Beautiful Mess," but I quickly ran out of steam again. It's not because I'm bored of it or anything. It's hard to explain, but it's like... the passion for it runs out. And it's not gone forever. It comes and goes in waves. I'm going to continue the story. In the next few weeks, I'm going to try to find the muse for Stranger Things again and come up with some new ideas, but I need to guys to be patient with me until then.

Even though I'm working on my Originals story, it doesn't mean I'm able to just turn around and start on Beautiful Mess again, even if I want to to make you guys happy. I just don't know where to go, and I don't have the muse to figure it out at the moment. The reason I have been able to get back into the Originals story lately is because it's the first and only of its kind. Beautiful Mess unfortunately came after two forty page Stranger Things stories where I exhausted all of my ideas and muse.

I'm not giving up on Beautiful Mess. It will get finished. I just have to find the passion for it again. I know you guys probably have amazing

ideas, but it's not all about that :(It's about the muse. Sometimes it runs out. Sometimes I still run back to that safety bubble (*cough* my BTS boys *cough) especially right now because my pet, Doc, is dying really slowly and it's depressing me.

I guess ultimately, I just want to say sorry. And if you read nothing else in this announcement other than the bold bits, that's fine lol as long as you know I'm sorry. And I appreciate and love you guys more than you know. I'm sorry for letting you down. I haven't abandoned you. Give me some time. Let me work on finding the muse again. Beautiful Mess will be continued as soon as possible.

And mostly, THANK YOU FOR BEING AWESOME.

-ImObviouslyCrazy-